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A SPANISH HOLIDAY

A SPANISH HOLIDAY

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The Kiss of Helen

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A SPANISH HOLIDAY

BY

CHARLES MARRIOTT

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY
A. M. FOWERAKER, R.B.A.
AND TWENTY-TWO OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN & CO.
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BERNARD WALKE

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A SPANISH HOLIDAY

CHAPTER I

GETTING THERE—JAMES IN PARIS—OUR TRAVELLING COMPANION—THE LANDES—THE PYRENEES—IRUN

THE way things happen generally turns out to be at least more amusing than the way they were meant to happen, so I shall make no apology for the statement, which looks odd in print, that if we hadn't hoped to go to Italy we should never have gone to Spain. If anything certain could be predicted of the movements of a tramp steamer sailing out of a little Cornish port, we meant to go to Italy. James, who lives on the spot, promised to give me at least three days' notice of the steamer's departure—wherever she might be going. Her probable port, he said, was Genoa.

The next week or so passed in pleasant speculations: how far was Rome from Genoa? Should we really see Naples—and live? Could we afford to go to Venice? I had already mapped out a possible itinerary when I got a casual message

from James, that there didn't seem to be a steamer sailing to Italy within the time at our disposal, but would I like to go to Spain? Or, we could go to Antwerp "any day." It was, I think, the fine freedom of the latter alternative, rather than intelligent preference, which made me say emphatically:

"Oh, Spain for me."

"All right," said James, "we'll go to Spain."

James is not the real name of him whom, when I began to write these notes, I saw it would be tiresome to speak of as "my friend" or "my companion." Out of a list of some twenty names which I put before him he hesitated for some time between Horace and James, and finally chose the latter. So, without prejudice, I call him James. It is perhaps already obvious that the direction and character of our travels were to be influenced by his personality. That personality will, I trust, emerge by the way, and I will content myself now with remarking that its principal characteristic is resourcefulness. This may be illustrated by a single anecdote. James—and this lent a hopeful definiteness to the Spanish alternative—actually had been before with a cargo of china clay out of the little Cornish port to Bilbao. Alone and hungry in a mountain village, it seemed to him that his bodily salvation depended upon eggs. He didn't know the Spanish for eggs. Surrounded, according to his account, by half the village, he assumed a squatting position and

cackled, with immediate and delighted comprehension of his needs.

It was probable, he said, that we also should go to Bilbao. Contrary to its geographical situation and political importance, then, Bilbao became for me the centre of Spain. I got a large scale map of the country and began to estimate distances and calculate expenses—from Bilbao. Through a friend I obtained the address of an Englishman living in Bilbao, who, with a kindness which in the result he far exceeded, promised to help us forward on our journey into a strange land. At this point James let fall the remark that the steamer might go to San Sebastian or Santander or Coruña or Vigo. He even, though, I must admit, apologetically, went on to say:

"I suppose you wouldn't like it as well if we went to Portugal?"

I saw that it was time to make a stand.

"James," I said "we are going to Bilbao. For the purposes of our expedition anything that happens between our point of landing and Bilbao simply doesn't exist."

Although James had been to Spain before, the extent of our ignorance of the present state of civilisation in that country may be gathered from the fact that we quite seriously proposed on landing to assume the cloaks and the broad-brimmed hats of the operatic Spaniard, and also thought it necessary to provide ourselves with revolvers. It was, by the way, a first principle

that wherever we went we should take no more luggage than we could carry on our backs in rück-sacks. To the astonishingly complete assortment of clothes and materials for washing and shaving which may be crammed into these receptacles, we added a tin of China tea, a compass and a pocket camera. We also supplied ourselves with passports. James said that he knew "a little" Spanish, but the example I have quoted of his resourcefulness encouraged me to believe that I should do wisely at least to take the edge off my entire ignorance of that language. My discretion in giving an hour a day to one of those useful little paper-covered volumes in a "Simplified Languages" series was vindicated when James said on the eve of starting:

"I say; you'll have to do the talking, you know; I'll do the shooting."

On the eve of starting, James also discovered that an absolutely unbreakable engagement would keep him in England for twelve hours after the steamer had sailed for Bilbao.

Then I took matters into my own hands. A whole chapter might be written about the inner circle of the merchant shipping world of the port of Cardiff; a world which seems to make its headquarters in a small grocer's shop and a general store kept by a blue-eyed Norseman and a swarthy Italian, known respectively to their familiars as Stockfish and Macaroni; but this is not the place for it. For two days we

haunted the Cardiff Docks and kept appointments with and endured the stories of skippers in the little back parlour of the grocer's shop in the hope of chancing on a vessel sailing to Bilbao. For by this time even James agreed that it would be as well to stick to the one fixed quantity in our so cloudy plans, and Bilbao was burned upon our hearts. We learned many strange things about the sea, we were offered a barque for sale, we were invited to go to any port in Europe—except Bilbao. At last, on a drizzling forenoon, alongside of a rusty tramp under the coal-tips of the Bute Docks, we thought we had achieved Bilbao. But we did not like the look of our skipper. His being a cargo steamer, it would be necessary for us to sign-on as nominal members of his crew, and he was without exception the surliest man I have ever met. The only point in his favour was that he alone out of all the shipping world of Cardiff really was going to Bilbao, though touching at St. Nazaire, and he was willing—and even greedily anxious—to take us for a consideration. We had got so far as to take our places amongst a crowd of firemen before the wired-in desk of an office, and I was trying a pen, when James touched my arm.

"Do you realise," he said, "that before we get to Bilbao, we shall have killed that brute or he will have killed us?"

We picked up or rück-sacks, walked out of

the building and, so far as I remember without consultation, made our way to the office of Messrs. Cook and asked for two tickets to the Spanish frontier. Our plans, which had begun with a vague dependence on the movements of a tramp steamer, which might or might not happen to be sailing to a Spanish port, had hardened into a fixed determination to get to Bilbao by any means whatever. Once across the water we were prepared, if necessary, to tramp to Bilbao. We were given tickets to Irun and directions how to proceed further. An hour later we were on our way to London, and before eight o'clock the next morning, the 4th of July, we were in Paris.

James had never been to Paris before, and so we decided to spend the day there. Those first few hours with James in a foreign city considerably enlarged my knowledge, which I had supposed to be intimate, of his personality. Next to resourcefulness I found that its most prominent characteristic is a constitutional inability to accept things as they may happen to be. Show him an order or a prohibition and he is uneasy until he has evaded it. This does not proceed from insularity; he is one of the least aggressively "British" Englishmen I know, and I have never seen a man more immediately loved by foreigners, as by his own countrymen, of every class. It is merely that he must satisfy himself that the thing can and ought to be done

differently. In Rome he will do as Rome does, but only after, as if compelled by some inner force for which he is not responsible, he has by word or action expressed his opinion of its unreasonableness. We went to the Louvre—he is fond of pictures—and within five minutes he was mentally rehanging the Salon Carré.

"Shouldn't have that," he murmured to himself as he stood in the middle of the polished floor; "I should put that there, and that there."

When we left the gallery we sunned ourselves in the more formal part of the Garden of the Tuileries and watched the children playing the then newly-revived game of Diabolo. We were very tired, and, owing to our sudden change of plan, imperfectly washed, and, to say the least of it, not dressed for Paris. There were plenty of vacant seats, but James said:

"I'm going to lie on the grass."

"All right," I said, "but you'll be turned off."

That was enough; he stepped over the low railing and in a few seconds was fast asleep. The little chattering children fell silent over their game of Diabolo and put their fingers in their mouths; the scandalised *bonnes* on the seat beside me held up their hands and under their snowy frills conferred together in whispers. Before long a gendarme came round the bushes which lined the curving walk. I believe that for the moment he thought that James was

dead. It was comical to see indignation battling with concern on his bearded face as he bent over and shook him gently by the shoulder. James, who knows no French, opened his eyes and smiled up at him sweetly though sleepily, and then, rising to his feet, invited me to explain that we didn't know it was forbidden to lie on the grass. But it was James's smile rather than my apology which soothed the outraged official.

James then said that he was hungry. I proposed a *prix fixe* dinner at a little restaurant I knew of near the Ecole des Beaux-Arts or a *châteaubriand* at a neighbouring creamery. James said that he thought the restaurant would be more amusing. The moment we were seated, however, and the waiter had taken us in hand with that protecting kindness which is so grateful to the Englishman abroad, I saw the "No you don't" look come into James's eyes. He said that after all he thought he would have two boiled eggs and a glass of hot milk; he was not feeling very well. I said that in that case we ought to have gone to the creamery. James opened his eyes wider and said:

"What, do you mean to tell me that in a place like this they can't boil me a couple of eggs?"

I admitted that of course they could, but——

"Of course they can," said James. "Can't you, Johnny?"

Such is the effect of James's personality that "Johnny" not only did, but for the next half-

hour remained his worshipping slave, though their intercourse was limited to smiles and gestures.

I think that Spain really began for both of us when at seven o'clock we descended from the large hall, glowing with pictures of eternal Spring, of the Gare d'Orléans to the dim-lit departure platform, and saw the word "Midi" on the dark-green coaches of the train that was to carry us to Irun. A few people, the figures of romance, flitted restlessly up and down the long platform in the gloom as if to control their excitement. One felt that every now and then they whispered to themselves or to each other, "We are going South! we are going South!" and it was hard to shake off the delusion that we should emerge directly from this twilight into the full blaze of the meridional sun. We found an end compartment occupied only by a small, neat, intelligent-looking young Frenchman, who was already making business-like preparations for his comfort during the night. He greeted us pleasantly with the remark, "We are not too many," and we at once entered into an alliance of three to keep the compartment to ourselves. He asked us how far we were going, and said that he himself was going to Leon, but intended to break his journey at San Sebastian, which was a beautiful place where one could bathe. He was a mining engineer returning from his holiday.

"I am always glad to get back to the South," he said, "I do not feel well in the North; the

people in the North talk about nothing but work."

He, himself, with his round, compact head, blue eyes, and little fair moustache, was clearly of the North—I should say from Normandy—but it was easy to understand his meaning. He was no luxurious idler; his every word and every movement gave the impression that he was more practical and more energetic than the majority of even mining engineers, but he had lived long enough in the South to see through the essential humbug of the convention that "work" is the proper end of man.

We carried on our conversation in an extraordinary mixture of English, French, and Spanish. The last language our new friend was evidently picking up again with pleasure and some difficulty, after disuse. Occasionally he referred to a pocket dictionary, and he seemed glad for his own sake to encourage us to enlarge our scanty store of Spanish words and phrases.

Misled by preparations for the night—the rugs and pillows strewn about the carriage—I was a little startled when at twenty minutes to eight the train moved out of the dusk of the station into a still-golden evening. It was as if with anticipation of a new experience, made vivid by the sound of a still stranger language than that I had heard all day, I had lost the sense of what day it was. Paris was already a memory a little removed. Already the houses and gardens of this environ-

ment seemed subtly different from any that I had seen in France. We were going South. The knowledge that we were to be carried unseeing in the night through towns and cities familiar from books—through Orleans, Tours, Poitiers—was more thrilling than if we had been going to stare at them. We should have been to Tours and kept our illusions.

The engineer opened his bag, produced newspapers, guide-books, maps, and time-tables, and helped us to plan out our journey beyond the frontier. We must leave the train at Irun, take the Madrid express, and change at San Sebastian to the local line for Bilbao. We could not see much of San Sebastian in the two hours' interval, but we did not feel attracted by the Casino and the bathing which appealed to our brisk companion, and we instinctively saved up our appreciations for the place which was nominally the starting-point of our Spanish pilgrimage. The engineer intended to spend a day and a night at San Sebastian as a final relaxation before going on to his work in the wild and desolate region of Leon, which he said was "a terribly cold place in winter." He spoke of his miners with affection, though as lawless, and needing a firm hand and constant supervision.

We drew the green shade over the lamp and settled ourselves on the long, broad seats of the carriage. There was room on the one side for the engineer and myself lying at full length with only

our feet overlapping, and a rück-sack makes an excellent pillow, but I was for a long time too excited to sleep, though this was our second night out of bed. James had the other seat, shortened by the corridor, to himself. I learned with remorse, for I had been a little cross with him at the restaurant, that he was feeling very unwell, but he was soon sleeping. At some hour in the night, at some station I did not know, the door opened quietly, and with infinite caution so as not to disturb us, a pale man wearing a *boina*—the Basque form of the Breton bonnet—climbed in and cramped himself into the corner at James's feet.

I awoke out of a doze just before dawn. Peering through the window I could dimly make out dark, parallel lines in the fields, and with a strange thrill I understood that they were vineyards. Then we were crossing a wide river, pale under the lightening sky. Under the further bank lay a boat with a curious net similar to that in "*Le pauvre Pêcheur*" of Puvis de Chavannes. A few moments later we were at Bordeaux.

When we went to the buffet for coffee and rolls we noticed a new character in the appearance of the few people who at that early hour—not yet four o'clock—were hanging about the station. They were darker and softer, more graceful, though more free and energetic in their movements than the people of the France we knew. Their voices had a new quality, as if ripened by the sun. Most of the men wore the *boina*. It looked odd

to see a lithe, ivory pale, dark-eyed young man, with a picturesque bonnet slung over his ear, tapping axle-boxes, an act which with us is associated with the least romantic-looking type of man. We moved on again, the engineer becoming more restlessly happy with every *kilomètre* further south. Occasionally he broke into a little scrap of song. Our fourth companion had disappeared as unobtrusively as he came; none of us had exchanged a word with him. We passed vineyard after vineyard, the vines looking for all the world like currant bushes in a market garden, and fields of maize, the broad green leaves having a strange effect of dignity in the growing dawn. The houses we saw were all of the same type, a type which I had never seen before except in pictures; low and four-square, whitewashed and sometimes half-timbered, with low-pitched roofs of dark red, semi-cylindrical tiles. Many of them had little rude balconies with trellised vines in front, and the mulberry tree was common in their gardens.

Soon we came to a region of pine-woods growing in a country which in places was covered with gorse, heather, and bracken. The sight awakened some sleeping memory of a geography lesson, mixed up, too, with a story of, I think, Erckmann-Chatrian in my mind, and before I had consciously considered where we should be, I found myself murmuring, "We are in the Landes." It was from now that I ceased to regret that we had missed the voyage and come overland like any

tourists. Nature has arranged that the landward approach to Spain shall be like an austere preparation for a festival, and the hour gave us the full effect of its impressive monotony. Everywhere there were pine trees. Eastward the dawn glowed redly through their trunks—a visual effect of such intensity, that by some trick of association, perhaps through the likeness of the clustered stems to organ pipes, it was translated for me into the sound of organ music, as if a solemn prelude to the day. On the western side a white mist lay on the ground, beginning to rise and drift in thin spirals, and here and there giving the mirage effect of water; though, indeed, what we saw may have been water, for I believe that there are salt lakes in this region. In the distance isolated pine-woods showed as deep, smoky-blue silhouettes.

Fixed to the trunk of nearly every tree, at a height varying from one to six feet from the ground, was a little tin cup to collect resin. How often this is done during the life of the tree I don't know, but many of them had old scars in addition to the open wound. Black and white Swiss cows with soft-toned bells at their necks wandered among the trees or knee-deep in the bracken. The combination of hot sun with a "nip" in the air, the thin scent of pines and mist, and the predominance of heather and bracken and blackberry canes gave to the morning the "feel" of an English autumn though the season was full summer.

From Dax we had our first sight of the Pyrenees. They were the first mountains I had ever seen, and the pale, far peaks gave me an indescribable thrill. It is possible that, more than most mountains, the Pyrenees gain from the level lines above which they are first caught sight of, but I was immediately struck by their unexplained appearance. That, rather than greater height, seemed to me the difference between a mountain and a hill. Even the highest hills are implied in the growing uneasiness, the troubled aspiration of the land about them; they are merely the summit of a wave or the highest of a series of waves; they at once fulfil and explain the anatomy of the land; if they were not there—to use an Irishism—they ought to be; but mountains happen without warning or preparation. They are "monstrous" in the better meaning of unnatural. From the summit of the highest hill in Cornwall—and we have some respectable hills in Cornwall—one sees the "why" of it in the lie of the country for twenty miles round, carried out in plan by a corresponding swell in the coastline, or a reef, or a chain of little islands—like the isolated chords, the hop, skip, and jump, in the concluding bars of music. But the Pyrenees happen across the narrowest portion of the land they divide into France and Spain; they leave off, there is nothing to let them down into the sea at either end. The comparison is not really ridiculous, because, whatever the difference in scale, one

might reasonably expect the mountain to repeat the conditions of the hill. But the mountain has no conditions; it cannot be predicted from the hill; it is "there." It may be, of course, that it is finally a matter of scale, that the mountain is so big that one cannot take in its relation to the land; but the really important truth remains that the emotional effect of the mountain is different not in degree but in kind from the emotional effect of the hill. I don't know how far the Pyrenees differ from other mountains in their sudden emergence, but I am persuaded that it is this character of the unexplained, rather than mere height or mass, which gives to mountains their power over the imagination.

This is a digression, but I may be pardoned for wondering a little at my first sight of mountains. As we drew nearer to the peaks and were able to distinguish their delicate veining of light and shade, they took on for all their strangeness a certain familiarity. Where had one seen them before, those meaningless and yet emotionally so meaning shapes; those fantastic ribs and bastions and cornices? It came with a jump—in the backgrounds of Leonardo da Vinci. They wanted for their explanation not any troubled aspiration of the land about them, but such a face as we had seen yesterday on the walls of the Salon Carré. I am not surprised that a miracle happened at Lourdes.

At Bayonne we had a flash of very blue sea,

white foam, swaying masts, and long warehouses filled with barrels of wine. There were tall English girls with tennis racquets, bound for Biarritz, on the gravelled platform of the station. We were now in the Leonardo background, awakening the echoes of the mountains as we crashed through tunnels. We crawled through a limestone cutting, clothed with a dwarf and thorny acacia, where a gang of men repairing the line cheered us, kissing their hands. We emerged upon a bridge, and on the white road below us there was an ox-cart, the oxen, yoked together with a heavy bar covered with sheepskin, with a crimson fringe over their eyes, swaying gently from side to side as they moved forward at the slowest walking-pace of any living beast. At Hendaye, the last station in France, armed officials on the platform gazed up regretfully at the train as though greedy for contraband, and thereafter we went slowly, as if taking pains not to disturb a political boundary. Then we crossed the Bidassoa and were at Irun, in Spain.

CHAPTER II

CHANGING MONEY—SAN SEBASTIAN—THE BARBER—THE CHURCHES OF SANTA MARIA AND SAN VICENTE

OUR French engineering friend took leave of us here with many polite remarks about the pleasure of our company. As we descended from the train we saw the first *mantilla* and with difficulty refrained from staring at the captivating grace of it. It seemed hard to believe that the gravely-unconscious wearer had not assumed it merely to be looked at. We gave up the last coupons of our Cook's tickets with the feeling that we were venturing into the unknown. Our rücksacks were carefully examined by a polite official in grey-blue linen uniform, armed with a revolver, and the sight of his weapon made me feel already how foolish we had been in bringing ours. English firearms are contraband in Spain, and until I got rid of mine I was always bothered with a separate consciousness in my right-hand coat pocket whenever I saw a Customs official.

It was rather an anxious moment when I said my first Spanish sentence to a Spaniard in asking for two tickets to San Sebastian. As James remarked condescendingly, "it seemed to work all

right." When we went to change money we received twenty-five *pesetas* for a sovereign, the value of the pound "at par." With a feeling of helpless indignation we knew we were being cheated, but as we had forgotten to make sure of the current rate of exchange, it was useless to protest. The handsome official, whose olive skin lent an exotic richness to his uniform of dark blue cloth and gold lace, handed me my change with a smiling, insolent civility which showed that he knew that I knew he ought to have given me more. It is worth remarking here that the current rate of exchange may be found day by day in the financial columns of the newspapers, but we did not know this at the time. Though the Spanish official is generally ready to take advantage of ignorance, he seldom tries to dispute a definite demand. He is not more dishonest than we are, but he is more logical, since the whole system of commerce depends on one party to a bargain not knowing or being unable to stand out for the precise value of the goods exchanged. I suppose it is the Englishman's superstitious regard for the mere substance of gold which makes the man who would get the better of you over a horse or a pound of butter or a mining share, jib at giving you wrong change of a sovereign. Indeed, with Latin logic, the Spaniard might retort that he is even more meticulously honest than the Englishman since, theoretically, £1 = 25 p. As we climbed up into the Spanish train we were struck by the

unfinished look of the carriage though it was new, clean, and airy. Even the ends of the screws which fixed the alarm notice in the next compartment projected through the wood, to the danger of passengers' heads. This minor detail is, I think, characteristic of the Spaniard at work. He is intelligent and he is not wanting in energy, but he leaves off a moment too soon. We wandered up and down the corridor looking for a smoking compartment. There didn't seem to be one, and then James exclaimed:

"What fools we are; in Spain, of course, one smokes everywhere except where one is told not to—and even then——"

I believe that James did not really enjoy his tobacco in Spain until, in a Madrid tramcar, I pointed him out the notice:

"*Se prohibe fumar.*"

For the next few miles we had tantalising glimpses of the Bay of Biscay. Then we passed the land-locked harbour of Pasajes, very like a Cornish port but for the height of the surrounding hills, which was at one time the headquarters of the Basque whale-fishery. We reached San Sebastian at about nine o'clock.

When I had passed through the barrier I found that James was missing. Presently he came up with a look of quiet satisfaction on his face. I asked him what was the matter, and he said composedly:

"Oh, it's all right. I only wanted to see if

I could get through without giving up my ticket."

"And did you?" I asked.

"Of course," he said.

After submitting to another examination by the Customs people—for every town, at least in the north of Spain, has its separate *consumos* tax—we crossed the bleak hall and emerged from the station to be assaulted by a clamorous crowd of blue-bloused men, several of whom wore in their *boinas* brass labels bearing the word *Mozo* (porter). Here we felt the advantage of rücksacks as a means of transporting luggage; when one is tired, hot, and hungry, it is so easy weakly to give up a handbag to a man one may or may not see again, and who, in any case, is probably an extortioner.

Our first impression of San Sebastian was of wide, untidy spaces and unfinished buildings under a blazing sun. On every side were large houses in different stages, whether of construction or destruction it was difficult to say at a first glance. We decided to get a meal at once. We crossed a rather florid bridge, and choosing one of several streets running parallel, entered a restaurant called the Maison Dorée. The large, bare, but clean room with blinds drawn against the brilliant sun was attended by a single French waiter who said that we could have *almuerzo* or lunch in a few minutes. While we waited, he initiated a game amusing to us and profitable to himself by rolling

copper coins along the floor for a fox-terrier to pick up. The fox-terrier, by the way, or *fox-terriero*, to give him his proper title, is quite the "knowing" thing for the perfect "blade" in Spain. The meal when it came was excellent. We had flimsy slices of a peculiarly hard sausage, an omelette, some grilled meat, hake cooked in oil, the tenderest chicken in the world with salad, cheese, apricots, and pears, washed down with a good red wine. Then there were olives as big as plums. Hake—or *merluza*—we afterwards found was to be our companion at many meals. This, as James remarked, was "very friendly of them," the hake being eminently a Cornish institution and connected with many local stories. Indeed, I am properly a "hake" from the town wherein I dwell.

Being full of meat and wine, James was tempted by some devil of refinement to get shaved before we spent the hour or so at our disposal in seeing what we might of San Sebastian. We found a barber's by the sign of a brass lather-bowl with a semi-circular bite in the edge for fitting round the throat. By virtue of his winning manner James fell to the proprietor, while I was taken in hand by a good-looking youth with the arched brow, melting dark eyes, aquiline nose, and long and slightly retreating chin, giving the look of snoring, which we were to see repeated again and again in our travels. I was at my most helpless when James called from behind me in a muffled voice:

"What's the Spanish for 'Please, brush my hair'?"

I did not know and my position was not suitable for trying to find out. I heard James making strange explanatory noises, and then he cried:

"Oh, I say! the beggar's going to shampoo me!"

Lather and laughter prevented my interference. When the one had been wiped away and the other subsided I was moved by curiosity to ask by signs how one said, "Please, brush my hair." The youth nodded intelligently, and the next moment he had seized my head and begun the first stage of shampooing. I submitted as if that was what I meant.

Owing to James's unworthy concern for his appearance, it was now nearly time to take the train to Bilbao. We skimmed with our eyes the view from the Paseo de la Zurriola, the flowery quay where stands the monument to the Basque admiral Antonio de Oquendo, and, picking up our rück-sacks at the Maison Dorée, returned to the station. The ticket office seemed rather late in opening, and there was no sign of a train. I took my place in the queue, and when my turn came asked for two tickets to Bilbao.

"*Otra estacion*," said the man laconically.

Until that moment we hadn't known that there was another station in San Sebastian, and it was now ten minutes to the departure of our train. A

dozen hands pointed wildly into space. We rushed from the door and picked up a small boy to guide us. As he trotted along at our side he kept repeating anxiously:

"You will reward me well? You will reward me well?"

We reached the station to find that the train had just gone, and that there was not another till three-thirty.

In spite of our language, we felt a sneaking gladness that we were to see something of San Sebastian after all. Our small guide received a *peseta* with a yell of joy, and we gave up our rücksacks to a tall Basque who said "*Muy bien*" and flung them nonchalantly under the counter of the *consigne* without offering to give us a receipt of any kind. He was a strongly-built, weather-beaten, clean-shaved man, with the high cheek-bones and boldly curved nose and jaw characteristic of his nation. His face and his clothes—blue bonnet, blue linen blouse, and corduroy trousers—made him look oddly rural for his office.

San Sebastian is built upon a sandy peninsula which connects Monte Urgull with the mainland; the town and the rock, once an island, enclosing the little bay of La Concha as with a protecting right arm. The mouth of the river Urumea washes the outside of the elbow. Monte Urgull might be the closed fist warning off intruders. It was once taken from the French and once defended against the Carlists by allied Spanish and British troops,

and the unmilitary spectator wonders a little helplessly "why?" One thinks of that

> "Brave old Duke of York who had ten thousand men,
> And marched them up the hill one day, and marched them down again."

We found our way back to the town over rubbish-heaps where new houses were a-building, and across waste places where women were dressing wool or filling mattresses. We passed the imposing new church of the Buen Pastor and came into the Avenida de la Libertad, the central thoroughfare of the town, running across the middle of the peninsula from the bridge of Santa Catalina at the mouth of the Urumea to the bathing-beach of La Concha. Open tramcars with white curtains crossed either end of the avenue, which is lined with plane trees. We were struck by the number and size of the windows, or rather glazed balconies, of the tall houses. At a first glance the whole front of a Spanish town-house seems to be made of glass in a series of rectangular oriels connected vertically. The idea seems to be to give the occupants of the room the effect of outdoors, the greatest amount of light with the least exposure to weather, and this at once betrays the chief defect in the climate of Spain, the prevalence of bitter winds. The avenue was thronged with people, the dominant colours of their dresses being butcher-blue and black with here and there a note of orange or cardinal, a woman's kerchief, or the

uniform of a soldier. At intervals, too, the stream of sober colour was punctuated by the hot scarlet of the curious cylinders, resembling "fire-queens," fitted with roulette wheels and carried on the backs of little boys as gambling machines for iced water or sweet wafers. A few of the women wore the *mantilla* or the even more graceful *velo*, a black shawl of a material resembling nun's-veiling, covering the head and draping the figure to the hips. But here, as throughout the Basque provinces, most women of the peasant class cover the backs of their heads with brightly-coloured kerchiefs having three corners knotted into "ears" and the fourth tucked in at the nape. The effect on some of the lean, brown, bright-eyed older women, with one "ear" standing up and another lopping down, is comically rakish, reminding one of the March hare. The people were talking animatedly, and yet there was wanting some familiar under-current of sound. Presently I recognised the reason to be that they nearly all, men and women alike, wore canvas shoes, generally white but sometimes red or yellow, with hempen soles, called *alpargatas*.

We followed the avenue and came out under tamarisk trees upon the Paseo de la Concha, overlooking the bay. San Sebastian under a brilliant sun was a little too sparkling and alert, the contrast between reddish rock and very blue sea a little too frank for beauty. One was reminded of Dawlish. If Napoleon had conquered England and held it, I fancy that Dawlish to-day would be

looking very much like San Sebastian. Away to the left we could just see the royal palace of Miramar, designed by an English architect, fronting the little island of Santa Clara, and beyond, the headland of Monte Igueldo which forms the western arm of the bay. To the right, between the glittering Casino and the dark mass of Monte Urgull, the little harbour and all that remains of the old town looked cool and grey and inviting by contrast with the general hard brightness. We turned in that direction through narrow streets and along slippery quays where here and there a watchful *carabinero* leaned on his *Mauser*. I don't know if smuggling between France and Spain is still carried on as described in Pierre Loti's *Ramuntcho*, but certainly the old town of San Sebastian, with its convenient water-doors and sly entries, looks as if it had private reasons for being content with neglect and obscurity.

With a foresight unusual in him, James remembered that he had some acquaintance with a local shipowner who might be able to arrange our passage home when we required it. We found the office on the quayside, but James's friend was away at Pasajes. The clerk in charge invited us to use the telephone, but we failed to reach the right person. While waiting in the office, with its railed-in desk and maps and coloured pictures of steamers, I reflected on the queer insularity which gave me a new little shock of surprise every time I saw a Spaniard using the

appliances of modern civilisation. "*Quien llama?*" ("Who calls?"), by the way, is an improvement on "Hallo!"

We entered the church of Santa Maria, an eighteenth-century building in the "baroque" style of architecture, and were immediately impressed by what we afterwards found to be the two most striking characteristics of the churches of Spain; darkness, and the importance of the *retablo*, or reredos. As a general rule in Spanish churches the light, as the decorative passion of the builder, is concentrated upon the altar and its immediate surroundings. The *retablo* of Santa Maria, like the rest of the building, is florid and impressive but not beautiful. As we stood there, a black-robed sacristan shuffled out of the darkest corner of the church and began to describe the various altars, naming the saints upon them. He said that this was the church that the King of Spain attended when he was in San Sebastian, and he showed us the spot where he knelt.

We followed the narrow Calle del Treintaiuno de Agosto—the date of the capture of the town from the French in 1813—with its broad eaves supported by richly carved corbels. Here and there the velvety shadows were warmed by a figure leaning over a wooden balcony, a splash of carnations, or clothes drying. At the far end of the street we caught sight of the tall, windowless, buttressed walls of San Vicente. It looked like the stern of a ship. San Vicente seems to have

turned its back on the Casino and the new town, which Santa Maria tolerates, and to wait for a return of simplicity. It is not patronised by royalty.

San Sebastian is the fashionable watering-place of Spain, and it looks as if, by some caprice of the wealthy, prosperity had taken it unawares, and roused it into an almost hysterical frenzy of building. The contrast between the old town and the new is more piquant than anything we have in England, and helps one to understand French novels in which very "smart" people of the *monde* and the *demi-monde* are brought into immediate contact with the most primitive surroundings. Quite conceivably, with another turn of fashion the tide of prosperity will recede from San Sebastian, the Casino will look as desolate as only a building of that character can look when fallen out of use, but San Vicente will remain.

From the Calle de Narrica I tried to photograph San Vicente, but found that here as in so many places, at the necessary distance the tall, heavy-browed houses closed in upon the church so that only the shadowy, vaulted porch was visible. A number of children lined up in front of the camera, and two little girls followed us up the street. When we asked them where was the Plaza de Guipúzcoa they told us and went away, as if they had only followed us to be of service. In the Plaza de Guipúzcoa the magnolias were in bloom. The square is small, but, as we stood on the little

bridge in the centre, the surrounding houses, including the Palacio de la Diputacion, or local Chamber of Deputies, were entirely hidden by trees.

We sat outside a café in the Alameda or boulevard near the Casino, where a fountain played under the trees. The waiter brought us wine; two small glasses of thick, brown wine with the tang of leather, and two large glasses of water. The afternoon was wearing, and the more fashionable world of San Sebastian was beginning to stir. Officers on horseback and young bloods, with linen suits and panama hats, in carriages passed us in the direction of the Concha. Little boys with trays of sweets dodged in and out between the carriages or followed the tramcars, and every now and then a weedy policeman, wearing a shako and armed with a black stick, with a manner, as James remarked, of "looking for his wages," would rouse himself and drive them away.

CHAPTER III

THE MOTHER OF ALL THE SOLDIERS—BASQUE VILLAGES —LOST IN BILBAO—THE SAILORS' INSTITUTE

THE station for Bilbao was filled with a large, excitedly talking, but orderly crowd, standing in queue before the booking-office. Lounging on the rail beside the pigeon-hole, a uniformed official with a revolver in an unbuttoned holster scrutinised each person as he took his ticket. Most of the people seemed to be of the peasant or labouring classes, but there were a few of a more sophisticated appearance, reminding one of seaside "week-enders" at home; portly papas and mammas, girls in white dresses and fashionable hats, and young men in tweed suits. Some of them carried flimsy valises of green canvas with bright brown leather straps. The man in charge of the *consigne* gave us our rück-sacks on demand with the same unquestioning informality with which he had put them away.

Hitherto in order to save time we had travelled second-class, but for the future we intended to go third. Our reason was frankly economy, but a single experience was enough to convince us that we should have missed the chief interest and

pleasure of our holiday if we had travelled by any other class. Indeed the only disadvantage of travelling in Spain by the "*correo*" and "*mixto*" trains—which alone carry third-class passengers—is their slow rate of speed, which seldom exceeds fifteen miles an hour. When I took our tickets I received, as before, change at the rate of only twenty-five *pesetas* to the pound.

We took our places in the least crowded carriage, which was divided into only nominal compartments with bare seats. Spanish trains have one welcome advantage over English in that not only the windows over the doors but those at the ends of the seats are made to open. Next to me sat a stout, middle-aged woman, with an open weather-beaten face, wearing a print gown and a coloured kerchief on her head. She carried a large, flat basket, containing parcels of food and several bottles of wine, which, with apologies for disturbing me, she pushed under the seat. There was something peculiarly self-reliant and cheery in her manner as she sat upright, hailing this person and that throughout the length of the carriage.

Presently there got into our compartment a handsome young soldier of about nineteen or so, with a long olive face and a little black moustache. He wore a scarlet *boina* with a brass badge, a long-skirted blue coat and scarlet trousers. He carried a rifle, which he placed carefully in the rack, and a leather post-bag which he kept on his knees. We learned afterwards that he belonged to the Basque

military police, a body of men whose duties, helping in the Custom-House service and supporting the Civil Guard, are apparently not very clearly defined. They are known by a different name in each of the three Basque provinces: *Miqueletes* in Guipúzcoa, *Miñones* in Álava, and *Forales* in Vizcaya. The young *Miquelet* and the woman at my side were immediately in animated conversation. I could understand little of what they said, but apparently she was requiring him to give a detailed account of his recent movements, and supplying him with a good deal of advice for the future. At first we thought she must be his mother, but we afterwards found that she was on the same friendly admonitory terms with all the members of his corps, so we christened her the Mother of all the Soldiers.

The train seemed to take a great deal of sending off. Three times a bell rang loudly, but nothing happened except that people talked more and more excitedly. Armed officials wandered up and down the platform, occasionally glancing into the carriages. At last, punctually to the minute, we were off, and for the first half-hour or so the experience was almost terrifying. The narrow-gauge line passing through a mountainous country, we crashed through cuttings and tunnels with a deafening noise which made the train seem to be travelling at a reckless speed, particularly when rounding the most violent curves I have ever seen on any railway. Sometimes the train seemed to be chasing its own tail and very nearly catching it.

The gradients, too, were sharp and sudden, and the pitch of the line round curves was so extreme that, the coaches being swung on bogies, the houses and churches we passed seemed to be leaning away at an angle of twenty degrees. I noticed that the coaches on this maddest little railway in the world were made by the Bristol Wagon-works Company. As there was only one lamp to the whole carriage, and that hidden from where we sat, the effect of broken light and violent shadow on the harsh, animated faces and restless hands was most impressive, and enhanced the devil-may-care character of the whole business. By and by we began to find it wildly exhilarating; a feeling which James expressed by suddenly sitting up in his corner and saying, *à propos* to nothing:

"Hang the expense!"

Before long we began to recognise, too, that whatever we were to see in Spain, we were now passing through some of the most fascinating country we had ever set eyes upon. It was like a glorified Devonshire; a country of deep, wooded glens and wide, fertile valleys redeemed from prettiness by the bare limestone peaks of the Cantabrian mountains. A broad, winding road, that seemed to gain rather than lose in beckoning charm from its well-kept condition—as if the whole scheme of things were too big to need the pathetic appeal of picturesque decay—kept more or less close company with the line, and every now and then we came upon a tumbling stream with brown, shadowy

A BASQUE VILLAGE

pools that looked troutful. Between Orio and Deva we had glimpses of the sea. The valley bottoms were bright with maize and corn framed in the woods of oak and chestnut, knee-deep in bracken, which clothed the lower slopes of the mountains. We saw many familiar flowers, heath and scabious and rest-harrow, but larger and fuller in their tints than those at home, as if their natures had expanded under happier conditions.

Every few miles we drew up at a village of crumbling, brownish-yellow stone and soft red tiles, clustered round a church which was generally set upon a little hill. The churches were all of the same type—a type, I believe, peculiar to this corner of Europe—apse-ended, with high, buttressed walls, pierced at rare intervals with very small windows, and graceful towers, in which bells of blue-green, tarnished metal were hung visibly, crowned with a lantern. In most cases a penthouse roof, or *portico*, of red tiles, supported by pillars, ran round the outside of the church at a height of twenty feet or so from the ground, giving the effect of open aisles and suggesting, with truth, that the church was the centre of not only the spiritual but the social life of the village. Sometimes at a little distance from the village there would be a small cemetery, a rectangular enclosure on a gentle hill, with roofed walls for meditation, planted with cypress trees.

At every station it seemed as if the whole village had turned out to greet the train. Everybody seemed to know everybody else, particularly,

to use an Irishism, the mother of all the soldiers at my side. At several places two or three of her sons were waiting on the platform; they came forward eagerly to shake hands with her, and to receive a parcel of food or a bottle of wine, or to hand a letter to their young comrade who sat nursing his post-bag with a grave air of responsibility. Nearly all the men we saw were clean-shaven, with strong jaws, bold features, and bony brows. They all wore *boinas* and embroidered linen shirts with collars, but no neckties, and sometimes a broad sash round the waist. Some of the younger women were handsome, and, again, amongst the very old we saw some extraordinarily interesting faces, brown and deeply lined, with piercing dark eyes, like the pictures of old Indian squaws. All the women, young or old, moved with a large freedom, and most of them had thick hair, very neatly arranged, more frequently brown than we had expected to see, and occasionally red. All the people seemed happy, and there were no evidences among them of extreme poverty. What impressed us most of all was the general air of brotherhood; I have never been among people who seemed so bound together by the sense of common humanity. And whenever the train started the woman at my side called out "*Adios!*" in a clear ringing tone that seemed full of hope and courage; it was "God's in His heaven—All's right with the world!" in a single word, a word that seemed to contain all the special meaning which has evapor-

ated from our "Good-bye." Isn't there, perhaps, more than a verbal difference in the fact that whereas we, a little doubtfully and evasively, hope that God may be with our friend, the Latin confidently commends his friend to God?

The bond of brotherhood among the people at the stations, and between them and the people in the train, was extended in the most natural way to us two strangers. We were not embarrassed by curiosity or officiously welcomed, but in a dozen little tactful ways made to feel that we were among friends. If we tried to ask a question in their language everybody within reach listened eagerly, and from one or another came a word or a sign, a suggestion to help out our meaning. I thought with shame of the revolver in my coat pocket; it was as if one had gone armed into the presence of a courteous host. At a place called Mendaro I took a photograph of a little chapel perched on the side of the mountain. A man in the next compartment, who might have been anything from a farm labourer to a small tradesman, leaned over the partition and told me that it was the Hermitage of St. Ana. On my trying to continue the conversation he said quietly, "*Parlez vous Français?*" He listened patiently to my stumbling efforts in that language without any of the amusement that the average Englishman of his class would have shown in similar circumstances.

I was struck by the intelligent interest that he and others took in my camera. It was evidently

a new experience to them, but they seemed to have an immediate grasp of principles. Another thing that impressed me was their quickness at map-reading; it is very rarely that one meets an English peasant who can find his way about a map. I spoke just now of a man's apparent "class," but, indeed, it was the most difficult thing in the world in his and other cases to guess what they "did." This was partly due, no doubt, to their all being dressed alike, but more to their simple brotherliness and humanity. They were fellow-creatures first, and this, that, and the other only by accident.

As if inspirited by the full-mouthed "*Adios!*" of the gallant mother of all the soldiers, the little train racketed along, swinging round a curve, panting up a slope, and then gliding with a squeal of brakes down the decline. Looking out of the window one would see the engine plunge into the hillside from the middle of a maizefield like a bolting rabbit. One felt that the driver was a man with a temperament and gave it full play. At intervals, while the train was at full speed, the face of the guard would appear at the window with a friendly "*Buenas tardes.*" So far the villages we had seen were entirely agricultural, but presently we came to a place where there was a manufactory of small-arms—the first hint that we were approaching the ironfields of Bilbao. The long window of the factory overlooked the line, and men and boys working before it in their shirt sleeves kissed their hands to girls in the train.

Just outside the station the embankment was being widened. A cart, with solid wooden wheels, drawn by a yoke of oxen, was perched on the summit of a mound of earth. It was beautiful to watch the patience with which the oxen, guided by a man with a goad, very slowly turned in their own lengths in a position where a false step would have sent them rolling, cart and all, into the road below.

From a narrow wooded valley we came out upon a level plain of cornland, from which the mountains retired on either side, allowing their grandeur to be more clearly seen. A thunderstorm which had been brewing all the afternoon was closing down upon them. Heavy clouds rolled over their peaks, making strong contrasts of light and shade, and adding to their impressiveness. From here we followed the valley of the Durango, which flows into the Nervion or Bilbao river. The land on either side was extremely well cultivated; maize, now at about half its growth, was the principal crop, but there were also little vineyards—the vines being trellised about four feet from the ground—fruit gardens, and fields of corn, beet, potatoes, and tomatoes. Soon we came in sight of the iron-mines; the crude evidences of human labour—tall chimneys, raw soil, and reddened water—looking depressing under a drizzling rain. We descended through a long tunnel and were at Bilbao.

For some reason the crowded station oppressed

me; it seemed dark and unfriendly. After more than two days and two nights of travelling, fitful dozes, chance toilet, and snatched meals—from sheer excitement we had forgotten to have any food since our morning meal at San Sebastian—we were tired, hungry, and dispirited. When we had passed the Customs we were assailed by a crowd of porters, and I weakly gave up my heavy rück-sack to the first man that asked for it. James cried, "You juggins! You'll never see it again!" and I brutally wrenched it away from the man as he was leaving the door. But when an excited youth pointed to the *Mozo* in his *boina*, which I mistakenly supposed to be an official badge, I simply couldn't resist the opportunity, and gave him the bag. I argued with James that we must have a guide of some sort, and he succumbed to my example.

We followed our guide into a mean street with a narrow mule-tramway. Our first business was to find the Englishman to whom I had an introduction, and ask him to direct us to an hotel. I hadn't his exact address, but never doubted that we could get it at the post-office, and told the man to take us there. But I soon saw that I had grossly underestimated the size of Bilbao; it was nearly eight o'clock, and dusk was falling in a drizzle of rain. James, who had only approached Bilbao from the sea before, did not know where we were, and he presently remarked that our guide had a very evil face. Looking round I saw that

he had been joined by a companion as ugly-looking as himself. The appearance of the quarter we were in did not encourage us to risk a row by taking our rück-sacks away. The obviously English cap I was wearing—James had preserved a *boina* from his last visit—marked us out as strangers, and I remembered that a sailor brother had told me stories about nasty things happening to strangers in Bilbao.

We followed our two ruffians, whose manner was that of men excited by an unexpectedly easy opportunity, beside the yellow waters of the Nervion, which looked cold and uninviting. At the door of a low-looking second-hand clothes shop a flabby man with broken teeth and a pear-shaped head asked us if we wanted lodgings. Our guide prepared to put down the bags, but we felt that a recommendation from this quarter was not to be trusted, and urged him on to the post-office. We passed through the crowded market and over a bridge into a brilliantly lighted street that led uphill. The sight of a railway station suggested a plan; we would get rid of our unattractive companions, deposit our rück-sacks in the *despacho de equipajes* or cloak-room, and find our way to the post-office on our own account. We entered the hall, and were immediately accosted by a policeman who, on learning our business, told us that the cloak-room was closed for the night. Our companions had the advantage of language, and it was evident that the policeman considered us their

lawful prey. Further argument only made him suspicious, and we had been warned in the event of a difference never to trust the ordinary police, who are sometimes in the pay of bad characters, but to appeal to the Civil Guards. There was no Civil Guard in sight, so we cut short the discussion and set out again for the post-office. We left the lighted street and plunged into a dark byway. James, who was beginning to have confused recollections of the place, was nearly certain that we were being led astray. We stopped a passer-by and asked him the way to the post-office. Apparently we were going in the right direction, and presently we came to the building, and entered a large room that looked like the left luggage office of a railway station. But the man in charge, who looked like a railway porter, did not know my friend's address.

We then ordered our guides to take us to the British Consulate. After some hesitation, and when they had conferred together in excited undertones, they agreed, but when we reached the place it was closed for the night. We were too distrustful of the men to go to an hotel of their choosing, and we did not care to pick one at random at that time of night, and without recommendation. On his last visit to Bilbao James had made the acquaintance of the chaplain of the Sailors' Institute, and he now proposed that we should go to him for a solution of our difficulties. We called a halt, and after some bargaining got

rid of our companions. I was not relieved at seeing them stealthily following us on the other side of the street as we made our way down into the centre of the town.

The difficulty was to find the Institute. James had a vague memory that it was somewhere in the direction of Portugalete, a little way out of the town, and that one reached it by tramcar. To both of us, however, Portugalete was only a name. We crossed a large open space, James alternatively picking up and losing the trail, and presently came to the beginning of an electric tramway under an avenue of trees. James was confident that it was the right tramway, but the conductor, a sinister-looking man with a heavy chin and a ginger moustache, said that it didn't go to Portugalete, and he didn't know where the Institute was. Our attempts to describe the place attracted attention, and the tram filled up with rough-looking fellows. I had taken a violent dislike to the conductor, which James, who said that wherever Portugalete might be this was the right tram to take us to the Institute, declared to be ridiculous. It may be that I received my first impressions of the man in an unfortunate mood, but our further experiences of him only served to deepen my suspicions; he was the only man in Spain who actually robbed us, and he was the occasion of the only drawn knife we saw during our visit, and before we left Bilbao James had come to share my opinion that he must be a "wrong 'un."

The tram line followed the course of the river, and seemed to penetrate into rougher and rougher quarters. Presently a bearded man in uniform, the lettering on whose cap suggested to me that he might be able to give me my friend's address, got into the tram. I spoke to him, and after searching his memory he wrote the address of my friend's office in my pocket-book. At that hour the office must have been closed, but the street and the number were at least something definite to steer by in our nightmare wandering. The bearded man soon got out and more roughs got in. As two of them passed the conductor he tapped his pocket significantly to indicate, I thought, that we were armed—for the butt of James's revolver was plainly visible. Such was the complete change of my mood since the afternoon that I only regretted mine was unloaded. I am a peaceful man, though I do not mind a row when a row is intended; but the prospect of a row being precipitated by some hasty and stupid misunderstanding of what was going on about us, through our ignorance of the language, was anything but pleasant. When the conductor came to take the fares of the two men sitting beside me he, I thought, reproached them for not trying to draw me into conversation. It is possible, it is even probable, that their intentions were nothing but friendly; that my acute discomfort was the result of an imagination, incited by sailors' yarns and confused by unfamiliar surroundings working on a tired brain and an empty

stomach, but I set down my impressions as I received them.

The rainy night over the river outside was presently lit up by a lurid glow and a hideous panting and screaming as of some great beast in agony added to its terrors. And then at last a young man got in who to my relief addressed me in English. He was not an Englishman—a German, I think—but he spoke enough of our tongue with an abominable Cockney accent to give us the information we wanted. Yes, we were right for the Institute. He spoke to the conductor, who, I am quite confident, knew where we wanted to go, and in a few minutes the car stopped.

We stepped off into the muddy road before the lighted doorway of a brick building with a balcony and a flagstaff. As if we had been expected, a young man hailed us cheerfully with:

"Come inside."

He told us with what seemed at the moment a reckless confidence to fling our rück-sacks down in a corner, and led us into a large room beset with little tables, whereat a sprinkling of sailors were playing games and looking at papers. At the far end of the room, her head haloed against the light, an English girl sat at a piano on a platform.

A thin man in clerical dress jumped up and greeted James with a cry of welcome. He was glad to see us, and, of course, we would stop the

night? There were no ships' officers in the house at the moment, and consequently there was a double-bedded room at our disposal. I don't know what incoherent expression of relief I gave vent to. I shook hands with several people, feeling almost sentimentally glad—and there was poetic justice in this after my reflections in the train—to see my fellow-countrymen. The chaplain knew the gentleman to whom I had an introduction, and told us that he was ill, so that in any case we should not have found him at his office. In a few minutes we were enjoying the best wash we had had for three days, and presently sat down to a comfortable Anglo-Spanish meal with an Englishwoman behind the teapot.

When we went to bed I suddenly understood why, in spite of a kindly welcome, and the comfort of dry clothes and food, I had still the sense of a surrounding hostility. It was due to the strange glow and the stranger noises outside. The window of our room looked out on the oily dark waters of the river, and on the other side there was a huge iron foundry. A gush of golden sparks, made fiercer and brighter by the neighbourhood of a tall black chimney, rose higher and higher into the night, raining down on the irregular roofs of workshops and the tiny, black, moving figures of men. The growing plume of fire was accompanied by a loud panting noise which seemed rising to some crisis. At a certain moment thick, ruddy fumes, pulsating with reflected light, were suddenly

liberated, the golden plume dimmed a little, and one involuntarily closed one's eyes as before an explosion. Then there was a harsh, long-drawn, descending scream, like the death agony of a monster, and a river of white fire ran horizontally into still pools of water. The light went out, the panting ebbed like failing breath, and there were a few moments of darkness and silence. Then the plume and the panting began again, and so they continued throughout the night.

CHAPTER IV

DOMESTICATED LIGHTNING—THE BASQUE PROVINCES—BILBAO MARKET—A PIECE OF ETIQUETTE—THE GAME OF PELOTA—BATHING AT LAS ARENAS—THE "FIESTA DE NAVARRA"—EFFECT OF MUSIC—THE SOCIEDAD BILBAINA—AN EVENING

IN the morning the disturbing pageant of the night resolved itself into a grey road with tram lines and a few shabby plane-trees, a leaden river with steamers at anchor, a huddle of workshops under brown smoke, and beyond a sullen range of hills. It was like looking at a theatre stage by daylight.

We were on the right bank of the Nervion, five miles below Bilbao, opposite the blasted region well-named El Desierto (The Desert). James's instinct for the trail had been better than his geography, for Portugalete was on the further shore three miles nearer the sea. If we had remained in the tram we should have been taken to Las Arenas and Algorta, two pleasant bathing villages at the mouth of the river.

The Sailors' Institute, which so hospitably entertained us, was built by Mr. John Cory, of Cardiff, for the benefit of English sailors engaged in the iron-ore trade between Bilbao and the ports

of South Wales. It is in charge of the chaplain to the English colony in Bilbao—whose church is at Portugalete—assisted by a reader, a lady manageress, and a housekeeper. The Institute contains a fine reading and recreation room, where services are also held, letters received, and light refreshments supplied, and billiard-rooms. Boarders are taken at reasonable rates. How admirably the place fulfils the needs of sailors adrift in a foreign town our overnight's experience enabled us to judge.

After breakfast we took the tram to Bilbao. We were struck by the light-hearted way in which the Spaniard plays with electricity. In the working apparatus of the line—as we afterwards observed in the case of electric lighting—there was none of the cast-iron solemnity one associates with the subject in England. The trolley wires were slung on rough, crooked poles, hardly distinguishable from growing trees, instead of being supported by the tall and rigid standards we were accustomed to see. Whatever the loss in stability and permanence, the gain, or rather the avoidance of injury to the landscape, was remarkable. One was reminded of Emerson's words about the function of the Poet:

"For as it is dislocation and detachment from the life of God that makes things ugly, the poet, who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole—re-attaching even artificial things, and violations of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight—disposes

very easily of the most disagreeable facts. Readers of poetry see the factory village and the railway, and fancy that the poetry of the landscape is broken up by these . . . but the poet sees them fall within the great Order not less than the beehive or the spider's geometrical web. Nature adopts them very fast into her vital circles, and the gliding train of cars she loves like her own."

I don't know if the Spaniard is more poetical than we are, but he certainly seems to have domesticated the lightning without degrading it or the landscape. Perhaps—and it is only another way of saying the same thing—he is more practical. It is as if with "deeper insight" he saw the essential fact and said, "All you want is a wire."

In some places the poles were so near to the line as to be a source of danger to persons getting on and off the trams. Quite in the gay, practical spirit of the whole business a notice at the end of the tram, which was furnished with louvre shutters to keep out the sun and let in the air, warned passengers against leaving it in motion because it was "unhealthy" to do so. And certainly the tram was driven with a dash and verve which made what is ordinarily the tamest method of travelling a voyage of adventure. At one point the driver flung himself upon the brake with a volley of language; for a moment nothing was visible but a cloud of dust, and then I saw that we had missed a motor car by inches.

Most of the passengers were of the now familiar Basque type: the men clean shaved and wearing *boinas*, the younger women bare-headed, the hair arranged with extraordinary neatness, the elder with kerchiefs and occasionally *mantillas*. A boy of about ten at my side asked me for a light for his cigarette. I was giving him a match when, arrested by his look of surprise, I remembered the native ritual of the occasion and carried it out though clumsily. You present your own cigarette to the asker, who takes pains not to touch with his fingers the end which goes in your mouth. Having obtained a light, he neatly reverses the cigarette and hands it back to you with a bow and a "*Gracias*." This boy and a companion of about the same age were gazing reverently at the pictures of professional beauties in a cheap journal. A red and black butterfly fluttered in and settled on the paper. The boys examined it for a few moments with murmurs of admiration, and then very gently gave it liberty. Looking very big and blond and pink and shiny by contrast with the other passengers, a Scandinavian skipper in a light suit, with brown boots, a bowler hat, and a portfolio of papers, sat stiffly in a corner of the tram. James touched my arm and pointed; I looked out of the window and there, nosing her way down the river, was the little steamer which according to our original plan ought to have brought us from Cornwall to Bilbao.

The district, which by night in the rain had

looked sinister, by morning sunlight was merely untidy. A surprising number of the dilapidated buildings are wine-shops, distinguished by a withered bush at the door. The belt of land between this long suburb, degenerating seaward, and the chain of hills enclosing the valley is laid out in market gardens cultivated up to the last inch, of vegetables and flowers—roses, lilies, hollyhocks, and carnations.

The last might be called the national flower of Spain; wherever we went we saw girls wearing carnations coquettishly in their hair, or still more piquantly in their mouths; and, indeed, the flower, when coloured to its name, with its blurred outline and spicy odour, seems aptly to symbolise the indolent though passionate Spanish beauty. I believe there is an elaborate code of meanings according to the position of the flower, as worn over the right or the left ear, or carried between the lips or in the hand, but it is not a language for the uninitiated.

The further bank of the river is lined with wharves, apparently from Bilbao to Portugalete. Behind them can be seen the curious arrangement of travelling baskets by which the ore is brought down from the mines to the river and the foundries. The taint of that metal to which Bilbao mainly owes its prosperity is over the whole valley in reddened water and a bronze haze, tempering the brightest sunlight, perceptible to the lips, and at evening providing atmospheric effects of lurid

IN THE ARENAL; BILBAO

beauty like those which are to be seen over the London river.

Nearing Bilbao the trailing suburb improves into a residential quarter of large mansions with well-kept gardens, where we saw oleander and magnolia trees in bloom. Here also are several fine public buildings, including the Jesuit University.

We found my friend's office in the busy, tree-planted Arenal which is at once the commercial centre and the pleasure ground of Bilbao. Mr. Merton—as for convenience I shall call him—was unfortunately still confined to his house with influenza, but his son put himself at our disposal in a series of friendly offices, from changing money to helping us to plan out our future movements. In the first transaction we learned that hitherto our ignorance of the rate of exchange had been taxed to the tune of two shillings in the pound. The most convenient way of carrying money in Spain, as Mr. Merton told us, is in twenty-five-*peseta* or five-dollar bills, each representing a pound "at par." It was pleasant to find our new acquaintance responding to our hastily formed liking for the Basque provinces with an enthusiasm based upon the intimate knowledge of a good many years. Young Mr. Merton, being an ardent cyclist, was familiar with every nook and corner of the country between Bilbao and San Sebastian and Vitoria. He spoke of the place and its people with an affection which recalled what one had heard of the passionate

nationalism of the Basques themselves. He could not understand why so few English people visited this part of Spain, and it was clear that in his opinion we should do well to give the whole of our time to the three provinces. And, indeed, more than once, when later we came to explore the neighbourhood on foot, we were tempted to give up our purpose of seeing something of the real Spain to spend the rest of our holiday in dawdling from village to village between Bilbao and San Sebastian.

This book is primarily a record of what we saw and heard for ourselves, but it may be convenient occasionally, as here, for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the country, to give a broader and more balanced impression of places and people than it was possible for two strangers to form in the time at their disposal.

The three Basque provinces form roughly an inverted triangle, with its base on the sea, bounded on the east by the Pyrenean province of Navarra and on the west by the provinces of Santander, Burgos, and Logroño, which are portions of old Castile. Vizcáya and Guipúzcoa share between them the coast-line of the Bay of Biscay, while Álava lies to the south. Bilbao, San Sebastian, and Vitoria are the respective capitals. The Cantabrian mountains run westward through the provinces in two parallel chains from the Pyrenees to Cape Finisterre. The climate of this mountainous or sub-mountainous region is mild and equable,

and admirably suited to agriculture, which is the main occupation of its inhabitants, except in the iron-fields in the immediate neighbourhood of Bilbao.

The Basques, who occupy not only the provinces bearing their name but Navarra and the neighbouring part of France, claim with apparent justice to be the oldest race in Europe. Their language, which, though I believe still occasionally spoken in remote villages, is practically dead, is unlike any other European tongue. It may be studied—after seven years the devil is said to have learned only three words—in place-names, in a few greetings, and in songs. In print, with its constantly recurring *z*'s and *k*'s, it bears a superficial resemblance to Hungarian—at least to a person ignorant of both languages—and there is also a hint of something else which puts one on the track of a tantalising theory of origins to which I shall refer again. The Basques might be described as the home-rulers of Spain. For centuries they were a republican community with freedom from taxes and military service. But during the Carlist wars between 1834 and 1876 they fought on the losing side of Don Carlos, and this led to the withdrawal of their *Fuéros*, or special privileges. They still, however, enjoy a certain liberty of local government.

The Basques are brave, honest, and industrious. As Mr. Merton said, "You could leave a bag of gold in the high-road anywhere in the provinces

and be sure of finding it again." By him and by others we heard it more than once repeated that "It is the Basque provinces that keep Spain together." By what—for no reason but a comparison with other races—strikes one as an anomaly, the Basques are not only the most energetic and enterprising people in Spain, but they are also the most devout. In relation to the general Catholicism of the country they hold a place like that of the Bretons in France. On a first acquaintance and misled by their appearance, the headdress of the men, their connection with the sea, their passionate nationalism, and the fact that their most poignant political ceremony is associated with an oak tree, one is tempted to account for their devotion by assuming a Celtic origin to the race. What little is known of its origin, however, is directly against this theory. Whatever the Basques may be, they are not Celts. Every Basque is legally a nobleman and entitled to bear arms, but his pride of race is expressed only in a simple dignity and an unfailing courtesy to neighbours and strangers alike.

Bilbao is frankly a commercial town. Although it has suffered the æsthetic degradation which seems to follow inevitably in the wake of mining, it preserves the atmosphere of romantic adventure and the old, inexplicable charm of tarry and briny odours and mixed languages which hangs about a seaport. It reminds you a little of Bristol. Like Bristol, too, the principal contribution of Bilbao to history was the part it played in civil war. It was

the centre of both Carlist wars, and at least one battle in which English blue-jackets took part was fought in the trailing suburb we had passed that morning in the tram. The old town, a heart-shaped quarter of narrow streets, is tucked away between a crook of the Nervion and a range of hills, and on the left bank of the river a larger new town of wide streets and imposing buildings is rapidly growing. Some idea of the recent prosperity of Bilbao may be gathered from the fact that between 1885 and 1901 the population more than doubled.

We found our way to the immense market in the Plaza Vieja beside the river, overlooked by the fifteenth-century church of San Antonio Abad, as if the more primitive life of the town were gathered together for preservation at the foot of its oldest church. We found this to be the most interesting corner of Bilbao. The whole space between the range of covered markets and the surrounding buildings was taken up with booths and a great crowd of people, forming a shifting mass of colour that was sober and harmonious rather than brilliant. The slight annoyance of being stared at on account of my English cap, reminded me to get a *boina*. We went into a small shop on the outskirts of the market, where, for the sum of one *peseta*, I achieved, if not invisibility, at least a protective affinity to my surroundings. The buying of the *boina* was quite a charming little function. Not only the proprietor but three or four customers were inter-

ested in the transaction. They seemed to take it as a personal compliment that a foreigner should wish to wear the cap of the country. The whole stock of the shop had to be overhauled to find a *boina* of the proper size and droop; mirrors were brought, and when I was finally capped to the satisfaction of the audience, they declared, evidently with the idea of paying me the highest compliment they knew, that I would pass for a Basque. The advantage of the change to ourselves was really remarkable. Thereafter, unless we spoke, we passed everywhere without the least attention.

The stalls, overflowing with flowers, fruit, vegetables, pastry, poultry, fish, clothing, and "fancy goods," were so closely packed together that it was difficult to move between them without upsetting something. Everybody was talking loudly and excitedly but good-humouredly. Against the general ground-tone of blue, dull orange and yellow and a tint that I can only describe as faded cardinal were the predominating colours of the dresses. As many people seemed to be there for pleasure as for business. Girls in twos and threes, with linked arms and flirting fans, and young "bloods" with cigarettes or carnations in their mouths, wandered up and down the central avenue under the glass roof of the covered market. Here and there we saw groups of bare-legged fisherwomen; magnificent creatures who walk ten miles by night from the coast villages of Bermeo

and Plencia with heavy loads in flat baskets on their heads, to deliver their fish fresh to Bilbao market in the morning. We saw many familiar fish in the market, bream, gurnet, red mullet, and the inevitable hake.

For a few *centimos* we bought our lunch—two rolls of maize bread and a pound of cherries—at the stalls and took it into a wine-shop facing the river. On the parapet leading to a bridge somebody had roughly painted in large black letters "*Viva la repub*—," and ended for want of room. The revolutionary sentiment, strangled at birth, so to speak, struck me as peculiarly and pathetically Spanish. The tavern was a cool cave of a place, lined with bottles, fortified with barrels and wine-skins. The man at the counter and a fox-terrier were its only occupants. We got two tumblers of rough but good red wine, drawn from the skin, at the rate of a penny a glass, and carried them to a rude table near the door, which was protected from the sun by a swaying curtain of white canvas. Two or three labourers presently came in and, opening newspaper parcels of food, ate and drank with us. From each man we received a rough but friendly greeting.

Afterwards we lounged about the narrow streets of the old town, with their tall, cliff-like houses, looking into shop windows watching the progress of world-old but to us unfamiliar trades, the crafts of the coppersmith, the worker in hemp, and the turner of wood, and every moment growing more

fascinated by the unobtrusive novelty of the life about us. There was very little wheeled traffic in the streets, and the few carts were drawn by great, raw-boned mules with hard, wicked-looking heads or mild cream or dove-coloured oxen, preceded by a man with a goad, and moving slowly, as if each step were carefully thought out. In one place we saw a beautifully-kept donkey—a very different creature from the "moke" at home—festooned with bladders for making sausage skins. The constantly recurring sign, "*Se venden voladores*" ("Here they sell rockets") puzzled us until we remembered the innumerable saints' days and, consequently, holidays of the Latin calendar. An extraordinary number of the people of Bilbao seemed to be suffering from toothache, having their swollen faces tied up with handkerchiefs. This, we afterwards heard, is attributed to the presence of so much iron in the water.

We sat down to rest in the cool *portico* of the church of Santiago. The huge, irregular, ribbed vaulting overhead reminded us of bat's wings. A few men were sleeping on the stone benches, and a gang of little boys played some desultory and to us incomprehensible game around the pillars. The smallest and prettiest running near us, we tried to make friends with him. James had a never-failing attraction in the shape of a watch at his wrist. I believe he could have worked his way throughout the length and breadth of Spain on this alone; it broke down the barriers of reserve with everybody

from Civil Guards and post-office officials to little children. The other boys came up and stood round us with friendly curiosity. When James addressed the child as "*Mi niño*" ("My little one"), the biggest of the group stepped hastily forward and said:

"Something Frenchman, he is not your little one. He is my little one, for he is my brother," at the same time menacing James with a piece of outstretched elastic. We corrected his notion of our nationality and soothed his brotherly anxiety, and when we lighted our cigarettes he and another boy politely asked for the delightful little photographs of Goya etchings which are given away with the cheapest matches in Spain. Then the boys retired to a little distance and gravely consulted together. They seemed, by their shy glances in our direction, to be discussing a point of etiquette. Presently we saw something being passed from dirty hand to dirty hand, and then the spokesman came forward and, with a bow, presented us with two tiny star-shaped biscuits. It would have been a sheer brutality not to have eaten them. We were now accepted as friends, and the big boy suggested that I should take his photograph, but he understood immediately when I explained that there was not enough light.

Being unable to get away from his office, young Mr. Merton had asked a friend to explain to us the intricacies of *Pelota*. At the time arranged a porter took us to a large, decayed-looking building

in the new town and handed us over to a tall Englishman who was evidently feverishly interested in the game that was going on. He hurried us up a stone staircase into a gallery divided into boxes or *palcos* overlooking the covered court (or *fronton*), where four white-clad men, two with red sashes and two with blue, were playing a sort of furious "fives." An umpire supported by two referees sat apart on a kitchen chair, and half-a-dozen men wearing scarlet *boinas*, with note-books in their hands and their faces upturned to the gallery, vociferated the quickly changing odds.

The clamour of the "bookies" and the excitement of our companion made it at once evident that the chief interest of the game as it is played in the larger towns is as a means of gambling. In itself *Pelota*, originally Basque but now played throughout Spain, is an admirable game of skill, needing strength and activity. The general principle of the game, as in fives, is keeping up the rebound of a ball from a high wall. Missing the ball, or causing it to strike the wall below a line marked at a certain height from the ground, or above the limit of the wall, which is about thirty feet high, gives one point to the opponents. The ball, which is of solid rubber covered with kid-leather, and weighs about four ounces, is played in three different ways; with the bare hand—probably the original method—with a gauntlet of basket-work, or, as we saw it played here, with a

heavy wooden bat about eighteen inches long, shaped like an Indian club with flattened sides.

The players we saw were highly-trained professionals; their quickness of eye and hand and the force of their "serving" were marvellous. Frequently the ball would rebound from the wall the whole length of the *fronton*, which was about seventy yards. They played apparently with whole-hearted dash and energy, but we were assured by our companion that the game was probably sold. And certainly at every fault there were loud groans and cries of "*Ladron!*" ("Thief!") from the people under the gallery, as if the players' dishonesty were taken for granted. Between the games the players, who were lithe young fellows in the pink of condition, drank wine or beer, and drenched their bats in water, rasping the handles with a tool in order to get a better grip. At the end of the afternoon our English companion had won about a sovereign. But for the lower level of skill, *Pelota* is more interesting as we saw it played afterwards in the villages by boys and young men in an open *fronton* surrounded by mulberry trees.

Towards evening we climbed one of the hills behind Luchana, part of the long suburb we had passed that morning in the tram. Here there is a lonely cemetery, a great square planted with cypress trees surrounded by high walls, with a massive gateway as if to secure the peace of the dead against the interruption of the living. On

each corner of the square a text of Scripture is deeply carved in Basque and Spanish. To give some idea of the baffling "look" of the former language, I quote the following:

"Labur larri ta kontank dira gure lurreko egunak."

Having omitted to note chapter and verse, I must give a literal rendering of the Spanish version:

"Afflicted, few and short are our days on the earth."

From here the town of Bilbao was hidden, but we had a good view of the Nervion, and fold after fold of the surrounding hills. An angry sky was settling down upon the further peaks, and the low sun filled the valley with dusty gold, enhancing the sullen beauty of this region of mines and furnaces.

We rose early in the morning and took tram to Las Arenas, to bathe. Las Arenas, well named "The Sands," lies at the mouth of the river opposite the bright little residential town of Portugalete, with which it is connected by a suspension bridge, a hundred and fifty feet high and more than five hundred feet long, and a flying ferry. It is a place of sand-blasted summer villas and hotels and tamarisk avenues overlooking the outer harbour with its long mole and lighthouse.

Bathing was a sober function in a roped-in enclosure of water and clammy seaweed that felt like tepid soup with the meat left in. A few men

and women in severe bathing-gowns clung to the ropes and churned the water with their legs. The man from whom we hired our boxes stood at the water's edge with sheets to envelope us the moment we emerged, but whether for our comfort or for reasons of modesty I don't know.

It was on our return to Bilbao that we saw the little incident which helped to confirm my bad impression of a certain tram-conductor. As our tram waited at a crossing we heard a shout, and an enraged young man, with a long knife in his hand, tore down the road. A heavy stone whizzed after him, and looking out we saw the conductor of the tram ahead, who was the object of my suspicion, in the act of hurling another. Of course we didn't know which of the two men was the aggressor, but the incident was another mark against the only man we met in Spain whom we regarded as an enemy.

This being Sunday, we attended High Mass at the church of San Nicolas, an octagonal basilica, with an altar backed by an elaborately carved but ungilded *retablo* on each alternate side. It is remarkable how a church gains in dignity, and at the same time in friendliness, from an open floor space unencumbered with seats. Most of the people knelt upon their folded handkerchiefs. In the middle of the polished floor a tiny boy who had provided himself with a camp-stool, followed the service with childish gravity and a complete absence of self-consciousness.

There is nothing remarkable of interest or beauty in San Nicolas, but in spite of the eighteenth-century debasement of style there is a certain restful satisfaction in the symmetrical regularity of its plan, and in the brown gloom, as of an old library, particularly when a little relieved by candlelight and coloured vestments.

We found the market as busy as yesterday. As I stood upon the steps of San Antonio Abad to take the photograph facing this page, a man asked me something about the *Fiesta de Navarra.* I did not understand what he wanted to know, and told him so. He stared and seemed, I thought, a little offended; but it did not occur to me until he had turned away that with blue serge suits, flannel shirts, and *boinas* we had so successfully adapted ourselves to our environment that he had mistaken us for his fellow-countrymen. I made a point of seeing him again and explaining that we were Englishmen, when he was all courtesy, and told us that this being the Festival of Navarra, all the Navarrese who happened to live in Bilbao were holding a reunion. Moving in the direction of the Arenal, we were startled by a series of reports which we at first thought were pistol-shots, but immediately concluded to be the rockets picturesquely advertised as "fliers." Then we came in sight of a procession of priests and children crossing the bridge of Isabel Segunda, which is the principal connection between the old and the new town. A vast crowd of people standing silently in the

BILBAO MARKET; SUNDAY MORNING

Arenal formed a lane for the procession to pass through, and from some corner emerged a Basque band of three musicians, each playing with one hand a kind of flageolet called the *dúlsinya* and with the other a drum or *tamboril*. Led by the musicians, the procession turned up a side street into the Plaza Nueva, an arcaded square of solid-looking houses. Here the Navarrese disappeared into a building, before the entrance of which the musicians continued for some time playing.

As we were unable to see what was going on we returned to the Arenal, where the municipal band was playing under the trees. It was playing Massenet's "Dance of the Furies," and playing it well. There is something a little terrible in the effect of music upon a Spanish crowd; one feels that the musician has a responsibility like that of a man bearing a light in the neighbourhood of a powder magazine. The large crowd surrounding the band-stand was silent and absolutely motionless. The people seemed actually to breathe in unison. The passionate absorption of their pale faces was intensified by the prevailing dark tones of their dresses and by the fact that heavy clouds were making a gloom under the trees. There were no individuals; it was one huge organism controlled by the conductor's baton. One understood why in some countries certain tunes are forbidden for political reasons. The changes of emotion in the music were immediately and unanimously reflected in the pale faces as changing lights are

reflected in the particles of a mass; at a passage in slow time it might have been said that the whole crowd was plunged in grief. When the music ended, a little shiver like the stirring of leaves passed over the crowd; quite visibly, and before bodily movement had begun, the single organism split up into individuals as if at the release of some tension. And then, as if the weather had waited for the music, the clouds overhead broke in a thunder-shower, and there was a laughing, chattering rush for the shelter of trees or the awnings of the numerous cafés that surround the Arenal.

We lunched with young Mr. Merton at a restaurant near the place where the Navarrese were holding their festival. As we sat over our *paella*, *merluza*, and *chuletas*, and listened to our host's enthusiastic description of the villages we were going to visit, there came up to us the muffled sound of speech-making followed by the clapping of hands, the stamping of feet, and the rapping of knives upon a table.

Mr. Merton took us to see the Palacio de la Diputacion or Provincial Legislature, a large new building in that exuberant "baroque" style of architecture which would be intolerable anywhere out of Spain; but somehow when seen in the right context—if the word may pass—of climate, manners, and language, escapes vulgarity and is not without a certain full-flavoured impressiveness. Over the main staircase there is a good stained-

glass window by a local artist representing the ratification of the *Fuéros*, or special privileges of Biscay, by King Ferdinand V. of Castile under the famous Tree of Guernica. The general appearance of the well-kept and handsomely furnished rooms and offices in the Diputacion seemed to indicate an efficient and progressive local government, and reminded one of the flourishing municipalities of Birmingham or Manchester.

Theoretically the Diputacion was closed to visitors for a reason which would not occur to strangers, and might be the cause of serious disappointment. On wet days, which are naturally the days a traveller reserves for looking at interiors, it is the custom in Spain to close public buildings for the sake of the floors. As in the present instance, however, this regulation will generally yield to the *peseta*.

On the following day Mr. Merton senior, who shared his son's enthusiasm for the land of his adoption, was kind enough to take the risks of convalescence from influenza to entertain us at his club, the Sociedad Bilbaina. This club was a revelation for which we had been gradually prepared by casual observations during the last two days, of the enlightenment and dignified amenity of civil life in this part of Spain. It was not merely the provision for social ease and comfort, the excellence of the luncheon and the appointments of the recreation-rooms, which were of a standard equal to that of the best clubs in London, that

so impressed us, but the regard for and evidence of the intellectual vitality of the community. Bilbao is frankly a commercial town, and I suppose its inhabitants would describe themselves as a community of business men; but their principal club possesses a library which one would expect to find only in a centre of learning. When Mr. Merton took us into this quiet room we were prepared for a good collection of books of reference; what we were not prepared for was a library containing the pick of European literature in prose and poetry, and the more significant works of modern science and philosophical speculation. At a hasty examination I noted the names of Dante, Milton, Goethe, Balzac, Lombroso, and Herbert Spencer. On the long tables, under green-shaded electric lights, I saw not only the native periodical publications, but the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, *Jugend*, *The Studio*, *The Art Journal*, and innumerable English, French, Italian, and German newspapers.

In addition to a splendid library the Sociedad Bilbaina provides a separate room for works of reference in those subjects with which its members are professionally engaged, and a room fitted up as a drawing-office for architects and engineers. Finally, the more purely recreative advantages of the club are completed by the peculiarly Continental institution of a roulette-room.

Our growing persuasion that in efficient organisation the private life of Spain is quietly advancing independently of and beyond its official institutions

was curiously confirmed, as if by an object-lesson, when, after bidding good-bye to our host, we went to the post-office to see if there were any letters for us.

An elderly, bearded man shuffled forward to the pigeon-hole of the *lista de correos* or *poste restante*, and without removing his pipe from his mouth, held out his hand for my passport for purposes of identification. He snored over the paper for a few seconds and his fat forefinger finally came to rest on the line describing my occupation.

"*Autor*," he said huskily, but with a certain childish complacency at his cleverness.

I repeated my name and pointed to it in the official handwriting and in my own, but he would have none of it. "*Autor, bien*," he murmured knowingly. He shuffled away and from a compartment labelled "A" took out a packet of letters. I protested, but he went stolidly through the packet, shook his head gravely and said "*Nada*" ("Nothing"). I beseeched him to try "M," but he only smiled sadly and folded up the passport. Both James and I were certain that there were letters for us lying behind the pigeon-hole, which was too small to climb through, and we said things loudly in several languages. Hearing the noise, a younger and smarter official came forward and pushed the old gentleman aside with an apologetic smile to us as if to say, "It's only his fun." He glanced at our passports and at once found our letters. In handing them over he

caught sight of the watch on James's wrist and asked how much it cost. This led to a conversation about the relative value of English and Spanish money, and a little shyly the official asked us what was the equivalent in *centimos* of the English penny stamp. After the enlightened atmosphere of the Sociedad Bilbaina, it was a little startling to find in the government office of a busy town, frequented by English people, one official who didn't know how to use a passport and another ignorant of the relation between the English coinage and his own even in matters which concerned his own department. The anomaly was one of the "*cosas de España*" which baffle the stranger.

Attracted by what we had seen of the coast, we decided to spend our last evening in this neighbourhood at one of the fishing villages beyond Las Arenas. We had the pleasant company of a young countrywoman of our own. An English girl without relatives in Spain has few opportunities for free movement out of doors in the evening, and this gave our companion a high-spirited enjoyment of the excursion. To keep in the picture she went bare-headed and carried a red rose in her hand. We took tram to Algorta, and the conductor happened to be the man whom I had come to regard as my natural enemy. There followed an incident, too trivial to be set down but for its connection, which finally convinced James that my first impression of the conductor was not unjust.

I asked him for three tickets to Algorta and gave him a two-*peseta* piece in payment. Avoiding my eyes and with a sullen, furtive manner as if he felt the dislike between us, the man gave me the tickets and a single copper coin of ten *centimos*. I knew that the ride was a long one and took the change without question. Some time later I happened to glance at the tickets and saw that they were for thirty *centimos* each, so that the man ought to have given me a *peseta* change as well as the ten *centimos*. It was as if one had received a penny instead of one and a penny. Of course it was too late to say anything now, and the trick had been so neatly done that we were more amused at my stupidity than angry with the thief. But it seemed more than a coincidence that we should have been cheated by that particular man. We were comparatively easy victims, but in no other case—except for the toll taken of our ignorance by money-changers — were we robbed or given wrong change or bad coin during the whole of our visit to Spain. The little episode coming on top of the others went to deepen one of those curious fixed ideas of natural enmity which I believe are at the bottom of many unexplained and apparently motiveless crimes. I have the almost superstitious feeling that somewhere, somewhen, and somehow I shall meet again a certain Bilbao tram-conductor and we shall have out to a finish the smouldering hatred between us.

A pleasanter incident happened in the tram,

and one that well illustrated the charming simplicity of the people. Sitting beside me was a tired-looking, poorly dressed young woman with a little girl of about eighteen months on her lap. The child was crying as if in pain and I did something to amuse her, with the result that she presently held out her arms to me. I took her on my knee and talked English baby talk to her. The mother smiled gravely and said in a tone of apology:

"*Habla Castellano solo*" ("She speaks Castilian only").

Dusk had fallen before we reached Algorta; a wonderful violet dusk full of soft odours and the soundless moving of the tamarisk. Behind the mountains which guard the mouth of the river lightning played almost continuously, but without any sound of thunder, and below the golden lamps of Portugalete were doubled in the quiet waters of the bay. We followed winding lanes along the cliff in the direction of a dark headland. Somewhere behind a high wall girls were singing a queer wandering tune "something," as James flippantly but accurately described it, "between a Gregorian chant and a coon song," with one full-throated voice following the air and others coming in chorus like the petition and response of a litany. Presently we came to a village of narrow descending streets, rude steps and little quays, dim lit with angle lamps, filled with the hushing of the sea, the tang of brine, and the scent of hidden

gardens. In a courtyard women were seated and children stooped over lighted candles, screening them with their hands, in some celebration which was half a game and half a piece of ritual. The children greeted us in laughing undertones, pressing about us in the dark affectionately but incuriously, as if we were long-expected. They touched us with their little hands, asking to be lifted up, and lisped their flower-soft names, Manuela, Asuncion, Dolores, claiming invisible brothers and sisters. The women, mothers and grandmothers, addressed us with the same quiet confidence, asking us if the little ones were not heavy for their ages, speaking always in a murmur as if under the spell of the night. We found our way, guided by the soft, laughing direction "*Abajo*," "*Á la derecha*," "*Á la izquierda*," followed by "*Adios!*" of some invisible man or woman, to a sheltered quay overlooking the bay with a furtive incoming of pale bands of foam and a background of mountains only relieved upon the night by the summer lightning which played unceasingly behind them. Here we sat for nearly an hour listening to the lapping of the water, speaking rarely, in a mood of absolute contentment.

I don't know the name of the village, I don't want to know it nor to see it again by daylight. I want to keep the memory of that evening unaltered. It is a memory with the fragile charm and at the same time the strange reality of a dream, made up of tamarisk, the odour of brine,

children's kisses in the dark and the hands and voices, the intimate human presences of people whose faces I did not see, whose names I did not know, in an unidentified place of crooked streets and hidden gardens on the shores of the Bay of Biscay.

CHAPTER V

A LITTLE MEAT — ON THE ROAD — GUERNICA—AN EMBARRASSING MOMENT—MARIA TERESA—THE CLUB

WE intended to make a little tour on foot through certain parts of Vizcaya and Álava before we rejoined at Vitoria the main line of railway which was to carry us to some of the more famous cities of Spain. As the immediate surroundings of Bilbao on the landward side are not particularly interesting, we took train to Amorebieta, a village about twelve miles out, on the line to San Sebastian. We shared a compartment with a school-treat, which was very like an English school-treat, with the same dozen ways of harassing the elder persons in charge, climbing over seats, and hanging out of windows, and the same high-spirited conviction that all the world outside wanted to come and play with it. There were also the inevitable two or three pathetic little big-eyed creatures who had "out-grown their strength," dazed with happiness and headache, who had to be brought out for air on the swaying railed platform at the end of the coach, which the railways of every country in the world except England have adopted, and which lends a new and agitating joy to tunnels.

There are practical inconveniences in having only a rudimentary knowledge of a foreign language, but they are more than made up for by the nature and variety of the resulting situations. Hitherto we had had little difficulty in making our wants understood, but before we left Bilbao for the country, we thought well to ask Mr. Merton's advice about certain practical details of intercourse with people less accustomed than townsfolk to the tongue-tied helplessness of foreigners.

"For example," I said, "at midday we come to a village where there is a modest *posada* or possibly only a tavern, and we want a meal. How do we set about asking for it?"

"Oh," he said, "it is quite simple. You stroll in, greet the landlord or the landlady with a hail-fellow-well-met air, and after an interchange of compliments you say, 'Bring me whatever you've got; *una tortilla*—an omelette, *un poco de carne*—a little meat; anything. They'll understand. For five *pesetas* a day you can live like lords.'"

At Amorebieta we found a typical *posada*, a low-browed, whitewashed building with a crazy, unpainted wooden balcony, overflowing with carnations, and a dusky interior, breathing the peculiar warm, sweet, heavy odour, something between the smell of the earth and that of a drug, the origin of which I was never able to trace, but which will always remain in my memory as the smell of Spain. A grandmother dozed in the doorway, and lean chickens walked in and out of the passage.

It would be as well, we thought, to order our meal and get rid of our burdens before we set out to explore the village. We entered, flung our rück-sacks into a corner, and doffing our *boinas* with an air returned the hearty "*Buenos dias!*" of the pale, stout, handsome landlady.

To her I repeated a variation of the formula we had learned from Mr. Merton. She nodded intelligently, and drawing us into the kitchen, which with its low, broad range without visible connection with any chimney, and brass and copper vessels, made one understand the phrase "*batterie de cuisine*," lifted the lid of a pot containing a *puchero*, the national stew of beef, bacon, cabbage, chick-peas, pimientas, and other savoury trifles. We had eaten the dish before, and knew that it was superlatively good.

"The very thing!" I cried, or thought I did, and James echoed my words.

"And at what hour will your graces eat?" asked the landlady.

"At half-past twelve," I told her.

I wish I could reproduce on paper the infinite soothing of her deep-throated—I spell it phonetically—

"*Moo-oo-y b'yen!*"

One felt that here was the woman who understood.

"Oh, this is all right," we exclaimed simultaneously as, after compliments, we left the inn to explore the village. We said that we had struck

the right note, and we talked with a touch of superiority about people who carried their nationality with them, who wanted bacon for breakfast, and objected to garlic.

Amorebieta stands prettily on a tributary of the Nervion. It is connected with Bilbao both by rail and by the tramway which continues to Durango. The village, surrounded by maize and corn fields, with a range of hills to the north, has a little Plaza with shops and a club, a large and externally beautiful church, with a tower at the east end, and some pleasant villas embowered with roses and honeysuckle. The river is crossed by a fine old stone bridge of several arches. The interior of the church is bare and lighter than is usual in this neighbourhood, with an organ gallery at the west end, and a shallow recess on either side forming an abortive transept. The gilded *retablo* overhangs in a half dome, and on the south wall of the nave there is one of those startlingly realistic, life-sized crucifixes, with actual hair, which are, I believe, peculiar to Spain.

To keep up the right note of *savoir faire*, we flung off our coats and took a hand at *Pelota* with the boys playing under the cool *portico* of the church. The game here was played with the bare hand, and I can't say that we were often successful in striking the ball, though the boys were politely uncritical. Two sore-eyed dogs, of some extraordinary breed between a pointer and a Chinese dragon, watched us in dejected amazement.

CHURCH OF AMOREBIETA

Afterwards we lay on the grass under plane trees, with their branches trained horizontally into a sort of pergola. The morning was brilliantly fine, with a feeling of thunder in the still air. Already we were beginning to feel the subtle demoralisation of the South, the inclination to do nothing contentedly and let happen what would. We were presently joined by a genial, able-bodied tramp, who assured us that he had walked from Paris to San Sebastian in three days, and that in the whole of Spain there was no work to be found save only in the mines about Bilbao.

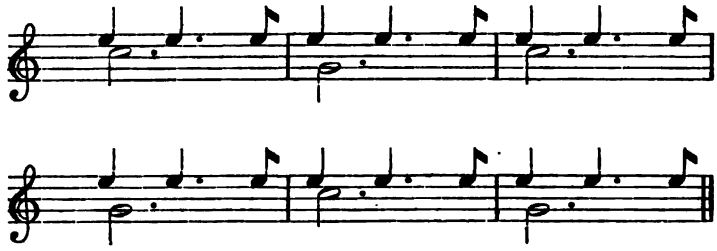
"My health," he said gravely, "forbids me to work in the mines."

As if he recognised that we were of the fraternity, he did not beg from us, though we afterwards saw him trying some of the villas; but he accepted cigarettes which, with a fine fastidiousness, he re-rolled in papers of his own. The papers of the cigarettes at forty-five *centimos* the packet, he said, were bad for the throat.

We left him asleep, and crossed the railway line to a little cemetery with a poignant mingling of roses and cypress trees, a chapel at one end and a tiled veranda supported by stone pillars. As we sat lazily counting the lizards which played about the hot steps, "Angelus" rang from the church tower.

The arrangement of the bells, which were flat in tone and poor in harmonics, as if some quality

were missing from the metal, was so peculiar that I set it down here.



On the first stroke a passing platelayer flung down his tools, uncovered his head, and crossed himself reverently.

At half-past twelve we returned to the inn. There was an air of excited expectancy about the place which a little disturbed us. The grandmother, who seemed to be suffering from senile dementia, was weeping bitterly. We were shown into a huge, bare room with whitewashed walls and a long deal table, at one end of which a rough but clean cloth was laid for us. The rest of the table was heaped up with newly-washed linen, which a hard-faced young woman was ironing. We pledged her in *chacoli*, the thin, sharp, "green" wine of the province, and trifled with the good maize bread, which is made in the likeness of a giant lunch-biscuit, with the legal weight stamped upon its glazed surface.

We were not greatly disturbed when another young woman brought in soup, because it is usual

to begin the simplest meal with the broth in which the meat has been boiled; but when the stew was followed by an omelette, we began to feel that our hostess was taking pains which we neither expected nor desired. We wanted to be treated as people of the country. After the omelette came the inevitable hake, cooked in oil with green peas, and after the hake a dish of roast meat, and after that a salad.

"They don't seem to have quite understood you," said James, splitting the verb and the ripest tomato at the same moment.

"Well, anyhow," I retorted, "you seem to be making a very good lunch."

"Oh, we'll go through with it," he said. "What's this—roast chicken?" It was. Little children came and peeped in at the door with dilated nostrils, and the brothers and sisters of the bird before us climbed over our boots and fought for crumbs of bread. The incoherent cries of the grandmother became distressing. Suddenly James dropped his knife and fork and turned pale; we had heard that there was no limit to the hospitality of Spain.

"Don't you understand why she is crying?" he said. "First the little tender children, and then—no, I stop at grandmamma."

Short of cannibalism we went on. The sound of frying, the clatter of dishes, continued. Three separate young women came and took turns at ironing to watch the Englishmen eat. The little

children danced in the passage with the remains of our chicken in their fingers, and the cries of the grandmother were choked by a wolfish gobbling. It was the day of their lives.

"Enough, enough! We have eaten well!" I cried at last wildly. The third young woman smiled and withdrew, but returned with a dish of peaches.

We lay on the bare forms and trifled with peaches and cigarettes. The hard-faced young woman went on ironing in silence. At last I found courage to say:

"How much do we pay for our excellent meal?"

She put down the iron and went out into the kitchen. There was a long and excited conversation. She returned and went on ironing. We were afraid to speak; she said nothing.

Twenty minutes passed. James reminded me that we had a ten-mile hilly walk before us. I took up my courage again and said faintly:

"*Cuanto?*"

She looked me in the eyes and said, without turning a hair:

"*Once pesetas*" ("Eleven *pesetas*").

"*Cuantas!*" we exclaimed in a breath.

"*Once pesetas. Dos duros y una peseta*" ("Two dollars and one *peseta*"), she added explicitly.

I've paid as much—about four shillings each—for a worse meal in England, but for a village in that part of Spain the charge was preposterous.

We put down the money without a murmur; we felt that the experience if not the meal was worth it. For comparison, I may add that at the next village—or town, rather—for two days we were lodged and fed "like lords" at the rate of five *vesetas* each a day, of course including wine. But we bargained beforehand.

Shouldering our rück-sacks, we took the road to Guernica. On the outskirts of the village we begged carnations from a girl with kind eyes on a balcony. At first she was coy, but finally, after a glance into the room behind her, hastily plucked two of the flowers, an apricot and a salmon pink, and flung them down.

Harvesting was going on in the fields around the village, the dull blue dresses of the reapers, men and women, contrasting pleasantly with the yellow corn. Whenever we passed a group within hailing distance they waved and called to us "*Agur!*" which is the Basque form of "*Adios!*" In a great shadowy barn we saw men and women on their knees threshing the corn by the simple method of beating small sheaves upon the threshold—thus explaining the origin of the last word—so that the grain fell into a sack spread beneath.

About half a mile from the village the road began to ascend, and for several miles we were steadily climbing the almost mountainous ridge which forms the northern wall of the Durango valley. The hillside was clothed with bracken

and little woods of oaks, chestnuts, and polled beeches which gave a singular value to the silvery outcrops of bare limestone. The waste places by the roadside and the hedgerows were full of wild flowers; roses, hemp-agrimony, rest-harrow, meadowsweet, purple loose-strife, woodbine, clover, campion, white and pink blackberry blossoms, St. John's wort, a campanula-like white and blue gentian, which I have seen in gardens in England, and several varieties of heath; one white, another with purple bells half an inch long, and a third pale pink splashed with crimson, resembling, if not exactly the same as, that which in England is peculiar to the Lizard district of Cornwall. A moist wall of rock above the road was fringed with a large-leaved maidenhair fern.

The sun was hot, but the air was so fine and pure and the surface of the broad, winding road so good that we did not feel over-tired. There was comfort, too, in the milestones with the distance plainly marked in *kilometros*—from our destination on the side approached, from Amorebieta on the side fronting the road, and on the further side, from Bilbao—and the short length of a *kilometro* is encouraging. When we had overcome the rise and were in sight of the long gradual descent to Guernica we lay down under the shade of walnut trees, with the fruit tantalisingly unripe, to smoke cigarettes. A railway viaduct spanned the road here, and we watched

A BASQUE FARM

a goods train, with the guard perched on a little high seat, slowly crossing it. Close by was a typical Basque farm; the whitewashed house with a low-pitched roof of red tiles weighted with stones, unglazed openings of a velvety richness of dark under the broad eaves, and a wide portal overhung by a rude balcony with a trailing vine and a splash of carnations against the white wall. The land about it was cultivated to extremity. The principal crop was maize, but, as if that were not enough, every fourth or fifth stout green stem gave support to a climbing bean, and its broad leaves provided a cool shadow for beet. This dependence of two secondary crops on that which is the staff of life in this neighbourhood is as beautiful as it is practical.

About four *kilometros* from Guernica, on a little bridge, there is a cross and tablet with the inscription:

"ACQUÍ MURIÓ CALISTO GOICOECHEA, EL DIA 8 DE AGOSTO DE 1880, ALOSI 9 ANOS DEEDAD. R.C.P."

(Here died Calisto Goicoechea, on the 8th day of August 1880, in the ninth year of his age. R.I.P.)

We asked a passing youth the meaning of the inscription and he told us the child was killed by being thrown from a cart. This simple and yet so graceful commemoration of the dead is a small instance of that unconscious and unquestioned unity of social and spiritual life, of

the visible and the invisible, which gives to the Basque people their principal charm. From one Englishman and another we heard dismal stories about the heavy toll which the Catholic Church takes of the hard-working peasantry of the Basque provinces, but I can't help feeling that any system of religion which succeeds in making the lives of its adherents so cheerfully consistent must be right for them. The effect is of a broad-based humanity which comes before any virtue or any special claim of family or friendship. It may be that people are instinctively kinder to foreigners than they are to strangers of their own race, and something no doubt is due to the emphasised relations, the forced value to common courtesies, which are caused by imperfect acquaintance with the language and customs of another country, but never at home have I felt the same confident nearness to the mass of my fellow-creatures.

Just as we were passing a solemn round-headed pine-tree which sentinelled the approach to Guernica, a thunderstorm broke in the hills and we had to run for shelter. I received a rapid impression of a church set on a high hill, a street with the sober dignity of an English provincial town, and a little tree-planted and arcaded *Paseo*.

At first we thought that we were not going to like the landlady of the Fonda to which we had been recommended. She was a stout, fair,

middle-aged woman with a manner which seemed both grasping and domineering, and the apologetic intervention of a melancholy, dark young man, who was apparently related to her, threw a discouraging light on her character. But afterwards we found that "her bark was worse than her bite," as the saying is, and that her first attempt at extortion was merely a matter of principle. Bargaining concluded, we were shown upstairs to a very small double-bedded room, one of several opening off a central apartment. The patterned brown and yellow wall-paper of this latter being continuous over the doors of the bedrooms, made it a chamber of surprises.

In the interval between the clearing of the storm and dinner we walked round the town, which had a little the effect of taking itself seriously as a local centre of enlightenment. I have never been to Stratford-on-Avon, but I should imagine it must be rather like Guernica. The people, too, had a subtle air, difficult to illustrate in detail, of living up to some tradition.

There is a very good reason for this, because Guernica, though but a small place—in 1901 the population was only 2200—is emotionally and historically the Mecca of Basque nationalism. Here grows the famous "Tree of Guernica" which, from time immemorial the meeting-place of the Lords of Biscay and still of the senators, is represented on the arms of the province and commemorated by its national anthem. The

town stands on the slope of a hill above the small river Mundaca, which finds the sea nine miles to the north at a village bearing its name.

On our return to the Fonda we found an interesting little group assembled in the comfortless and rather dirty *comedor*, or dining-room. The melancholy, dark young man, whom we presently understood to be the newly widowed son-in-law of the landlady, was there with his only child, a little girl of about four. He was in intimate conversation with a broad-shouldered, spectacled, middle-aged man, unlike the majority of his countrymen a little bald, with a solid-looking head and a brown moustache. He looked the born or abstract Uncle—who is not necessarily the brother of a parent—and so, until we learned his real name and enjoyed his friendship, we christened him. There were also three or four other men obviously unconnected by blood or sympathy with the central figures of the group.

We sat down to table together and were presently attempting a fragmentary conversation. Fragmentary it might have remained but for a ghastly breach of manners on our part which I do not now regret, because it showed us the essential good-breeding of our companions. Hitherto in places where we had dined, each dish was brought into the room divided into two portions—one for each side of the table. I don't quite know how

it happened—there were certainly two serving-maids in the room at the time—but of a certain grilled meat, apparently divided into separate helpings, James and I, being the last on our side of the table, took as we thought moderately and left two helpings on the dish. The maid, however, passed round the head of the table and at a sudden break in the conversation we looked up to observe with horror that the dish was meant to go all the way round. There was frankly not enough, and it was evident from the gestures of the serving-maid that there was no more in the kitchen. I don't think I ever felt more uncomfortable in my life. The silence lasted for ten awful seconds and then, with a tact which brought the tears into my eyes, our fellow-guests recovered themselves, and leaning forward as if to include us in a physical drawing together, began to talk all at once with a dozen pleasant inquiries about England and our experiences of their country. It was quite evident that for the moment they had been shocked, but now their one concern was to make us forget all about it. The thing couldn't have been done better at the table of a duchess.

A friendly atmosphere being so prettily established, we began to see that the really important person in the room was the little girl who sat opposite to us. She was one of the naughtiest and most self-willed little monkeys I have ever met, but she was irresistible. Piquant rather than

pretty, with pale cheeks, heavy eyes, and a languid mouth, she might have come out of a picture by Velazquez. For some time she had been making eyes at us, and we presently plucked up courage to address her. Crumbling her bread and without looking at us, she responded with the sly dignity of a finished coquette. One of us happened to speak to or of her as "*niña*" (little one).

"My name," she said, raising her eyes for a moment, "is not *niña*. It is Maria Teresa."

As if to give us time to fulfil the obvious courtesy of the occasion she waited for a few seconds, and then said with languid interest and a slight elevation of her brows:

"And what are your names?"

We told her, and for the rest of our stay in Guernica we were known as Don Jaime and Don Carlos. A little pettishly, as if reminding him of an oversight, Maria Teresa asked her father for wine. When her glass was filled we toasted her "*Salud!*" With the most perfect gravity she held up her glass in her little trembling hand and responded, "*Salud!*" It was all wrong, of course; she was obviously suffering from improper food, she ought to have been in bed two hours ago, and her father was her foolishly abject slave; but, as I said, she was irresistible. Speaking of her father, by the way, it was quite evident from his and his friend the Uncle's manner with the serving-maids if anything went wrong during the meal, that the whole household was in deadly terror of the mother-

in-law, whose voice could be heard scolding in the kitchen.

During the meal a little incident happened which illustrated the zeal for education in these provinces. A boy selling newspapers came into the room and seemed unwilling to accept our refusal to buy an evening journal. Somebody across the table said chaffingly to him:

"But they wouldn't be able to read it."

"What!" he cried, turning round in amazement, "Basques, and can't read!"

For the sake of variety we decided to drink our coffee in another place, and not being immediately successful in finding a café, we asked a tall, bearded gentleman sitting in a doorway if there was not one in Guernica.

"*Café, ah, café,*" he said thoughtfully.

Thinking that perhaps he had not understood me, I repeated the question more clearly:

"*Si, señor—café,*" he said, nodding reassuringly, and rising. He bade us follow him, and we passed through several dark streets until we came to an immense building, brilliantly lighted, with traces of recent construction, in the shape of planks and heaps of mortar on the waste ground about it. At the foot of the steps our guide waved his hand, and we understood him to say:

"Go straight in and make yourselves at home. You will find everything you need. Good night."

We went in, although the place looked very much more like a private club than a café. Appa-

rently it was both. A small and dejected-looking waiter met us at the door and conducted us to a large, bare room, measuring about sixty feet by thirty, electrically lighted, and encumbered with scaffolding. There were a dozen or so little tables in the room, and at the far end six men sat over some game of picture cards. They greeted us politely, and went on with their game. We ordered coffee, and sat down at one of the little tables wondering where we were. The only decoration on the white walls were a clock over the fireplace, and under it a notice: "For reasons of hygiene and urbanity, gentlemen are requested not to spit on the floor."

Apparently the decorative proposals, as indicated by the scaffolding, were a matter of grave consideration, for during the intervals of their game the card-players tilted back their chairs, and with gestures of proprietorship discussed the ceiling.

James's curiosity getting the better of him, he left me to explore the building. As he did not return after ten minutes or so, I rang for the dejected waiter and asked him what was to pay for the coffee. He said with a slightly self-conscious smile that the other *caballero* had already paid him. I thought it was time to look for James.

I found him in the billiard-room in difficult conversation with the gentleman we had called Uncle, and another wearing a workman's blouse and a red moustache. The former introduced himself as Don José, at our service, and expressed a wish

to take us over the building. From what we could make out, the place really was a club, but without any formal system of membership, conducted on co-operative lines. There were reading, billiard, and card rooms, a place for dancing and music, lavatories, and baths. Also there was a bar. The scheme of the whole seemed extravagantly out of proportion to the needs of the place, as if Guernica were expected to grow. I noticed that James seemed to be suffering from suppressed amusement, and feeling sure that he wasn't laughing at our so courteous host, I asked him the joke. Then the embarrassment of the dejected little waiter was explained. Attracted by the sound of singing, James had penetrated into the bar, where he found the little man with one arm round a strapping wench, holding aloft a small glass of some liqueur in the other hand, while he trolled a spirited stave. James said that his collapse from the enfranchisement of wine, woman, and song into his pathetic little self was the funniest thing he had ever seen.

Don José hearing that we intended to go to Madrid, principally to see the pictures in the Prado Museum, was acutely interested. He himself, he said, was a collector of pictures. He had a Rubens "about so large"—he measured with his hands—a Murillo, and a painting by a famous Italian, whose name he could not for the moment remember. We went through all the Italian painters we could think of, from Giotto to Cana-

letto, but though Don José clasped his hands upon an agonised brow, we could not hit upon the name. However, would we on the morrow do him the honour to look at his little collection? His house was in Guernica, but he was taking his meals at the Fonda, because the *señora* his wife was ill. To-morrow was Sunday—we were going to mass? That was good. Very well, then; it would be his pleasure to meet us after mass at the Fonda, and he would first conduct us to the Tree of Guernica, and afterwards show us the pictures at "*su casa de Vs.*" ("the house of your graces").

CHAPTER VI

THE OLD BASQUE—PELOTA—THE CASA DE JUNTAS AND THE TREE OF GUERNICA—THE SONG OF THE TREE—PLYMOUTH ROCKS—A COLLECTOR OF PICTURES—DANCING—RAMON—"AHPAHSTÉN!"

MORNING broke sunny and still, with a touch of crispness in the air and a light mist hanging about the mulberry trees in the garden behind the Fonda. The stuttering of a motor called me to the balcony of the *sala* which overlooked the railway station. A motor omnibus was about to start for Lequeitio, a fishing village fourteen miles away, which was to be our destination on the morrow. Half-a-dozen people in holiday clothes, the women wearing lace *mantillas*, were preparing to take their seats. The military, always present where two or three are gathered together in Spain, was represented by a *Foral* in his handsome uniform of dark blue and scarlet.

As we sat over our *café au lait* and maize bread, the brown and yellow wall-paper of the *sala* suddenly divided, and an old gentleman in a grey flannel shirt looked in. He retired, and a few minutes later the maid who had brought us our breakfast came up into the *sala* carrying a

can of hot water, and, without knocking, plunged through the wall into his bedroom. We heard her startled but quite unembarrassed "*Hola!*" and she came out hastily.

When we went to mass, the blue-green bells, balanced by a heavy beam above the ear, were being vigorously swung by two young men in a little open gallery high up in the church tower. It is not uncommon in Spain to see the bells make a complete circle, so thoroughly do the ringers fling themselves into their task. While waiting for the service to begin, we talked to a very old Basque who sat on a stone seat outside the porch smoking a clay pipe, with a tiny bowl set nearly straight with the stem, almost exactly like those belonging, I believe, to the Commonwealth period, which are sometimes dug up in England. This old man was full of memories of the Carlist war, in which he had fought on the losing side. He had seen many Englishmen in Guernica, but they had been amongst his enemies the *Chapelgorris* (Red-caps) or *Cristinos*. Perhaps he had killed an Englishman or two—"*Quien sabe?*" Now he was going to mass with two Englishmen "like brothers."

The interior of the church was so dark that we had to feel our way carefully amongst the kneeling congregation. There were but three windows, two high up in the north and south walls, and one in the west end. Eight massive cylindrical piers supported the roof, and the semi-circular

apse was entirely filled up with a *retablo* of coloured marbles. The mass music, in the silly manner of Concone, was disappointingly out of keeping with the gloomy grandeur of the place. Before the sermon, blinds were drawn over the north and south windows, so that the dim glow of artificial light was concentrated on the pale, impassioned face of the preacher. He spoke with dramatic intonation and gestures, but his utterance was so rapid that I could only pick up a word here and there. When we streamed out into the light we were astonished at the number of the congregation. Many of the women removed and carefully folded up their *mantillas* on coming out of church.

At the Fonda we received a message from Don José asking us to excuse him until after *almuerzo* or luncheon. Following the strains of music, we found the game of *Pelota* in full swing in a fine open *fronton* on one side of the little *paseo*, which was closed in on the other side by the arcaded building of the municipal schools. The band, in scarlet *boinas*, was perched upon some high ground above the *fronton*. A large number of men, women, and children in their Sunday best were watching the *Pelota*, keenly discussing points of play, and applauding not only the winners, but the losers, in a sportsmanlike manner. The movements of the players as they darted about the asphalt on their *alpargata*-shod feet were most graceful, and the way they put their whole bodies

into the blow in driving the ball was a perfect example of the muscular co-ordination which looks so easy because it is the result of long and careful training. With the arm fully extended, the weight of the whole man was applied to the palm of the hand. One of the players crossed himself before entering upon each bout of the game, and, during the intervals, boys of twelve or thirteen were allowed to take their turn, to be closely watched and criticised by the spectators.

The children surrounding the band were interested in our conversation, and we presently had a crowd of them about us. At first—and this we found to be the usual classification of foreigners—they took us to be Frenchmen, and some little boys were disposed to remind us of old hostilities. But a slim girl of thirteen or fourteen, in a red-spotted cotton gown, thrust herself forward and said:

"No, they are English."

"Well then," said the boys in effect, "they are heretics, anyhow."

"*Chito!*" ("Shut up!") said the girl, with a dignified wave of the hand; "I saw them at mass this morning."

It was as if she had formally adopted us. During the rest of the day, when we saw her at intervals, she kept a jealous eye upon our movements, and other children approached us only with her permission. She was very anxious to learn a few words of English, and would seize hold of us

in a perfectly unembarrassed way to call our attention to something of which she wanted to know the English name. As a general rule, in the parts of Spain we visited we found the girls more intelligent and more polite than the boys. Girls of from ten to thirteen, corresponding to the brighter pupils of our national schools, were generally the best persons to apply to for information or direction. The difference that another year or so made in their demeanour was astonishing; at fifteen or sixteen they were creatures of a most delicate reserve.

After luncheon, when Maria Teresa trusted that she would meet us later on at the dancing in the Paseo, we set off with Don José to visit "*el Roble Santo*" ("the Holy Oak").

> "á cuya sombra entre infanzones fieros
> reyes juraban populares Fuéros."
>
> ("In whose shade, among fierce nobles, Kings affirmed the popular laws.")

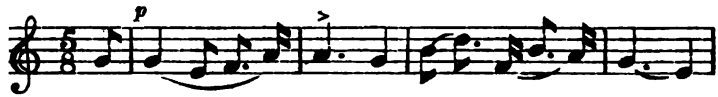
The present Tree of Guernica grows in the paved courtyard of the Casa de Juntas or House of Assembly. Don José explained that this is the "son" of the original Tree, destroyed by the French in 1794, which was very old even in 1834. The venerable trunk is enclosed in a glass tower behind the little Corinthian temple, which contains seven seats for the Basque senators who meet here every two years on July 1st. A flourishing family of "grand-

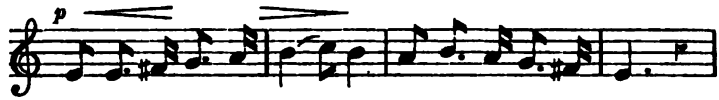
only special privileges which they, as distinguished from the rest of Spain, enjoy, are immunity from income tax and stamps on bills.

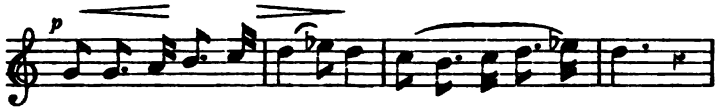
Don José told us a story which illustrates the passionate feeling of racial difference which persists in the Basque provinces. A man before justice, whether as prisoner or witness I did not gather, was asked to state his nationality. "I am a Basque," he said. He was asked the question a second time, and again said, "I am a Basque." At a third asking he condescended to explain, "I am a Basque first; afterwards I am a Spaniard."

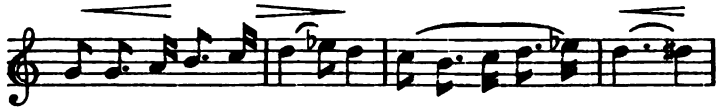
As we came away from the Casa de Juntas we saw a woman lifting up her little son to salute the Tree.

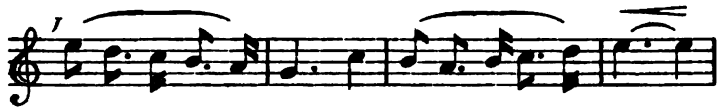
There are not many remains of Basque literature, but the words and music, the latter frequently in $\frac{5}{8}$ time, of a few folk-songs and dances may still be obtained. For the benefit of musical readers, the Basque national anthem, "Guernicaco Arbola" ("Tree of Guernica"), is printed below.

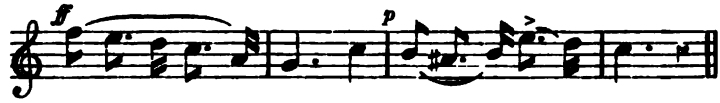












Don José went off to make preparation for our visit to his house to see the pictures, and we spent the interval exploring the pleasant streets of the town, which are planted with plane and acacia trees. On the higher ground are several large mansions in walled gardens. Besides the club, Guernica possesses a large building for brine-baths, and a little theatre, and I suppose a good many people from Bilbao make holiday here during the summer. Northward the railway line from Amorebieta follows the beautiful valley of the Mundaca to Pedernales.

At the time appointed we returned to the Fonda to await a formal invitation from Don José. It was brought by a little girl, I think his niece, named Antonia, who said that Don José would be honoured by the company of Don Jaime and Don Carlos at his house.

Antonia led us to the end of an unfinished street of new villas, where we saw Don José in his shirt sleeves in a little back garden planted with maize and beans. The child was about to take us directly to him through the palings, but he signalled frantically that we were to go round to the front. In a few seconds he came through the house with his coat on, and stepping into the roadway extended his arm and said:

"*Su casa de Vs.*" ("the house of your graces").

He then took us through the passage into the garden, the near end of which was wired off into a chicken run. With the delighted air of one bringing compatriots together in a strange land, he pointed to the dozen hens who led their families about the enclosure and said, "Plymouth Rocks!" We expressed our pleasure at meeting the feathered ladies of our nation in such flourishing condition and comfortable surroundings, and prepared to look at pictures. But, as James remarked, there was no indecent hurry about that. After we had, in broken phrases and with illuminating gestures, remarked the points and character of each individual Plymouth Rock, we turned to the subject of maize and the advisability of thinning it out.

Here the neighbours, a weather-beaten old man and woman, had to be called in, and after introduction to us over the fence they gave their opinion on the subject. As a result Don José removed a portion of the wire-netting and, with a separate consultation for every stem, decimated the maize. During this operation some of the chicks escaped through the wire-netting—and a chicken-hunt in a maize-field is not a matter of moments. Altogether we spent more than an hour in the chicken run. Don José was kindness and courtesy itself, but neither James nor I was particularly interested in poultry, conversation was difficult, and we were anxious not to miss Maria Teresa at the dancing. Moreover the afternoon was hot, we were tired, and there was nowhere to sit down. James tried a hencoop, but it gave way. When at last we thought we were going to see the pictures, Don José remembered that there was to be a charity performance at the little theatre that evening by the Sociedad Santa Cecilia in aid of the orphans of Guernica. The performance did not sound exciting, but we could hardly refuse Don José's offer to procure us tickets. So a boy was called and given two *pesetas* to get them. When the boy returned we asked Don José if we might not be permitted to pay for the tickets. At first he dismissed the idea, but we gathered that this was only a piece of etiquette, and when we repeated the request indoors he took the money without any protest.

Seeing the pictures was not a little embarrassing. Most of Don José's collection was, frankly, rubbish—bad copies of third-rate painters of "altar-pieces," Virgins and martyrs in forced attitudes and violent light and shade. Under the circumstances, however, it was impossible to be honest, and we racked our brains to find words to satisfy Don José's enthusiasm. He was evidently a sincere lover of pictures, but the victim of every form of imposture. For example, he described as "very early Spanish" a Virgin and Child that was obviously a modern Russian "Icon," brought, I suppose, by some sailor to Bilbao. The painting by a "famous Italian," whose name Don José could not remember, turned out to be an alleged Tintoretto, but even to our untrained eyes it was a clumsy forgery. Here and there among the pictures, which were in a large unfurnished room, some hanging on the walls, others piled upon the floor, was one that was at least interesting. There was, for example, a quite beautiful "Nativity" of the early Flemish school, probably a good copy. We began to wonder when we were to see the special treasures, the Rubens and the Murillo. After passing through several bedrooms, each with bare floor, a high-piled and elaborately carved bedstead and a massive wardrobe, we came to one which Don José entered with an air of almost reverence. Taking a small picture from a bracket he placed it carefully in my hands, and, putting his finger mischievously to the side of his nose, invited me to

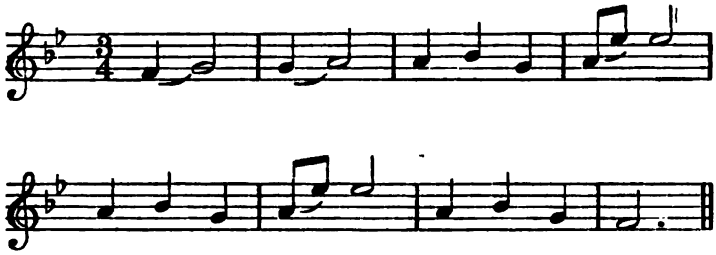
guess the painter. By a simple process of elimination rather than judgment—since it was obviously not a Murillo—I said "Rubens," and he patted me delightedly on the shoulder. The picture, which was about twelve inches by eight in size, represented the return of Ulysses to a far from grief-worn Penelope under a scalloped awning, and, judging from the flesh painting, it may very well have been a genuine Rubens. Anyhow, Don José said that he was sure of it. After we had looked at two or three pictures hanging on the walls, including a Murillo, a "Mater Dolorosa" which Don José acknowledged to be doubtful, he went to a beautifully carved cabinet in a corner of the room and told us to prepare ourselves. Then he unlocked the folding doors of the cabinet, stepped back a pace, and rapturously kissed the tips of his fingers to the picture exposed. This represented the Infant Saviour and St. John with the Lamb. I am not competent to say if it was genuine, but I understood that Don José had taken pains to have its authenticity proved. The subject was a favourite one of Murillo's, and certainly this was a very charming piece of work, though Murillo is not a painter who excites my extravagant admiration. Much more charming than the picture was Don José's delight in it, which more than made up for the rather tedious ordeal of admiring Plymouth Rocks and looking at his other treasures. The intrinsic, or even the artistic value of anything that makes a man so genuinely happy as Don José

was over his collection of doubtful masters, seems to me a matter of very little consequence.

Don José apologised for being unable, on account of his wife's illness, to entertain us at his house, but I don't think I am doing him an injustice in saying that his main object in inviting us there was to get us to admire his pictures. I hope and I believe that we rose to the occasion. When we took leave, he asked me if I would write about his collection in "the Catholic newspapers." I was obliged to "hedge"; but if, as he suggested, any of my readers who may happen to visit Guernica would like to look at his pictures, I shall be happy to give them his full name and address. They will, at least, enjoy the society of one of the kindest and simplest of men.

When we reached the Paseo the municipal band was playing in a little kiosk among the magnolia trees at the end of the *fronton*, where a desultory *Pelota* of small boys was encroached upon by the dancers. A slow waltz seemed to be the popular measure. The behaviour of the young people was extremely decorous. The men stood face to face with their partners, at a respectful distance, touching their waists only with the tips of their fingers. In the majority of cases, however, girls danced with girls; in every open space upon the asphalted walks of the Paseo two or three couples were dreamily revolving. I am tempted to quote the principal theme of one of the waltzes, not because it is characteristic of the country—it

may be English for all I know—but because the syncopated rhythm recalls for me with peculiar intensity the hesitating grace of the girls' movements.



A number of men, women, and children walked soberly but happily in an endless chain up and down the arcade under the schools and on the walks left free by the dancers. Many of the women wore white dresses, and the greater number were bare-headed, though some of them had lace *mantillas* and a few Parisian-looking hats. Nearly every girl had a red rose or a carnation in her hair, at her breast, or in her mouth. Their softly shod feet—for they all wore *alpargatas*—fell in time with the music, and indeed the distinction between walking and dancing was so little marked that every now and then two girls would link and drift revolving out of the procession without any break in its movement, as if flowers had fallen from a garland.

We soon saw Maria Teresa walking with a companion but little older than herself. In an outstanding muslin skirt she looked more like a

Velazquez than ever—indeed she might have been the Princess Margarita stepped down out of "Las Meninas." She bowed to us with smiling condescension, but it was evident that mere hotel acquaintances were not to be encouraged with undue familiarity at the fashionable promenade in the Paseo on a Sunday afternoon. After she had passed, however, she looked back slyly over her shoulder, and we saw her tap her companion with her little fan and tell her who we were. Our foreign speech and appearance attracted but little attention from the people. The popular hero of the afternoon was a young negro, a boy of about sixteen, in a naval uniform. He was never without a girl on either side, a little, I think, to James's annoyance.

At intervals the place of the municipal band was taken by three Basque musicians with *dúlsinyas* and *tamborils* who played the national dance—the *Zortzico*, I think it is called. This, which we saw danced only by girls in sets of four couples, consists of two movements or figures with a break between. The first is a sidling, swaying measure with balanced arms, and the second something like a Scotch reel. Both music and movements have an oddly Oriental character, and indeed the instruments, the pipe and the drum, are very similar in appearance to those I have seen in pictures of Nautch-dancing and snake-charming.

Asunción, our slim sponsor of the morning, was dancing in the set we watched with a girl a little

older than herself with glorious red hair. When the dance was over, Asuncion came up to us and produced a mixed collection of small articles—a brooch, a thimble, a ring, a handkerchief, a ball, and so on—from her pocket, with an eager "*Como se llama?*" with each, to learn their English names. I don't think Asuncion would have minded if one of us had asked her for the next waltz, but so few men seemed to be dancing that we thought it might not be good manners for strangers to do so.

Certainly the Basque villagers have solved the problem of a "pleasant Sunday" in a most satisfactory manner. Mass and *Pelota* in the morning and dancing in the afternoon. The whole feeling of the thing gains in charm from the amusements being pursued in the very shadow of the church. In many places, though not at Guernica, the high wall of the *fronton* is actually continuous with that of the church, as if the latter gave material as well as moral support to the games of the people.

An amusing little incident happened at dinner. Besides Don José, Maria Teresa and her father, there were present several strangers, including two young men, apparently "trippers," who, though civil enough, were less delicately considerate of our feelings in the matter of curiosity than the rest of our companions. Not knowing how long the dancing was kept up, we were anxious to get back to the Paseo, and decided to cut some of the meal. It so happened that we rose just after one of the young men had made some remark to the

other about us. Our friends looked acutely uncomfortable, and then it occurred to us that they thought we had taken offence. We tried to reassure them, but it was no use and we had to sit down again. After a decent interval we again rose, but a murmur went round the table, and Don José, putting his finger to the side of his nose, whispered impressively, "*Fresas!*" ("Strawberries!") quite in the manner of the abstract Uncle. The good people were not going to let us miss the strawberries. And indeed when they came, borne in by a maid mischievously smiling with the air of one springing a surprise, to be eaten with wine and sugar, they were quite worth waiting for. We found, too, that we needn't have hurried, for the Paseo was quite deserted. On our way to the theatre we met a very sleepy Maria Teresa being carried to bed on her father's shoulder.

At nine o'clock, in the expectation of a dull evening, we climbed a dark staircase and were suddenly projected into a blaze of electric light, the temperature of a stokehold, a babel of sound and the pungent fumes of cigarettes at forty-five *centimos* the packet.

When we had recovered our senses a little, we found ourselves in an overcrowded gallery, not the highest nor presumably the hottest, where frenzied hands and tongues endeavoured to make us feel at home. A couple of Civil Guards, in their dark blue and yellow uniforms, good-naturedly hoisted us over the heads of the people, and we finally

dropped into a seat between two happy, coatless, perspiring young men wearing the scarlet *boinas* of the Guernica Municipal Band.

He on the right was a brilliantly handsome youth, Castilian rather than Basque in type, with the jolliest laugh I have ever heard. He at once made friends with us, told us that his name was Ramon, and that he played the clarinet, the bombardon, and the guitar, and introduced us to his mother, a grave lady in a black *mantilla*, his little sister, and a strapping, swarthy young woman —not his fiancée, he assured us—with a carnation over her left ear, flashing eyes and teeth, and the dark down on the upper lip which lends an attraction rather than otherwise to the ladies of Spain. The other young man, who played the saxophone and the piano, was a more solemn person. He improved the occasion by giving me useful bits of information; that Guernica was an important market-town, with a present population of five thousand, for example. In a very short time we had cemented our friendship with the two bandsmen by changing *boinas* with them and taking off our coats. Ramon taught us idiomatic phrases to repeat to the ladies, whereat they hid their faces in their fans and shook with laughter. Down below in the stalls of the pretty blue and white theatre, where there was a notice requesting gentlemen not to smoke, people glanced up indulgently at our noisy corner of the gallery.

We had arrived in the middle of a pianoforte

solo, which did not seriously inconvenience the conversation of the audience. Our modest acquaintance with the language did not enable us to understand much of the farce which followed, but apparently it had no plot. A good-tempered and very red-faced young man wallowed on his stomach under a pile of fleeces while persons in extravagant costumes came and expressed varied but depreciatory opinions about him. A chorus of smartly-dressed little boys wandered on the stage or in the wings or among the audience as their fancy led them.

It was during the interval that followed this piece that Ramon began to ask the English for articles of clothing and personal adornment. James made full use of his unfair advantage for conversational openings in the shape of the watch at his wrist. What, for example, said Ramon, was the English for *reloj*? "Wautch." That was funny. "Wautch." It was passed from mouth to mouth. They tasted it like a new sweetmeat. "Wautch." One saw pretty carnation lips purse and widen with the unfamiliar sound, "Wautch." Oh, these droll English! But, pursued Ramon, supposing one wanted to say the time; now, for instance, what hour was it, in English?

"Half-past ten," said James gravely and distinctly. Ramon lay back and roared, while the lady with the flashing eyes thumped him soundly on his unprotected ribs. "Ahpahstén!" Oh, exquisite! Regardless that a flute solo out of

"William Tell" had now begun, his neighbours pressed forward to share the joke, and in a few moments they had all got hold of it.

They made it an anapæst, "Ahpahstén, ahpahstén, ahpahstén," like the galloping of horses, emphasising the final with a clenched right hand on the left palm; they pronounced it syllable by syllable, "Ah-pah-stén," with the meditative air of hens drinking water; they flung it at the performers as a cat-call; they cooed it into the folds of *mantillas* as a term of endearment.

We had to repeat the phrase over and over again. Girls lost their shyness and yearned upon us, watching and mimicking the movements of our lips with fascinated and fascinating appreciation. Never in my life have I been so closely pressed by so many attractive young women. In an incredibly short time the phrase had infected the whole gallery, and presently we saw the occupants of the stalls beginning to lean and whisper like a field of corn.

For a time Ramon's mother held out, presenting a decorous back to her noisy neighbours. Leaning excitedly towards us, with beads of moisture on his young forehead, Ramon asked the English for "*madre.*" "Mother, mother" he repeated after us with an intelligent nod. "Bien!" Rising in his seat he bent over and slapped the grave lady in the back with the single word "Muthaw!"

That conquered her. She spread her fan with a

quick movement, and bowing her head, shook with hysterical laughter. "Ahpahstén, Ahpahstén!" she murmured chokingly. The performance went on, a gramophone selection from "Poet and Peasant" followed a comic reading—during which Ramon whistled with his fingers and cried, "*Mas alto!*" ("Speak up!") for all the world like a London gallery boy—and gave place to a vocal duet, but "Ahpahstén" held the house.

We did our best to keep order, to give a polite and intelligent attention to the stage, but it was no use. We were the entertainment. During the beautiful singing of a part-song by the *concorso*, or male chorus, from San Sebastian, I saw the two Civil Guards with outspread hands arguing over the pronunciation of the enchanting word.

It was long past midnight when we were swept down the death-trap staircase into the open air. Our fame had preceded us. When we went into the little *cantina* on the ground floor of the theatre to soothe our smoke and laughter dried throats with vermouth and soda, the stout lady behind the bar murmured coyly as she gave us our change:

"Ahpahstén!"

It sounded like an assignation.

GUERNICA

CHAPTER VII

FAREWELL TO DON JOSÉ—A BASQUE ST. IVES—THE COLLECTOR OF CUSTOMS—"AT YOUR SERVICE"—THE OBSESSION OF THE KNIFE—MOSQUITOS AND "SERENOS"—THE HOSPITALITY OF "CARABINEROS"—THE LITTLE MAD RAILWAY AGAIN

WE rose at half-past six to take advantage of the cool of the morning. We had nearly fifteen miles to walk to Lequeitio, and for anything we knew the road might be mountainous. The people at the Fonda evidently thought we were a little mad for not travelling by the motor omnibus which makes the journey between Guernica and Lequeitio twice a day. It would start in an hour, at eight o'clock, said the maid who brought us our coffee.

Early as it was, Don José ran out of his house as we passed to embrace us cordially, ask if we were provided with cigarettes, and advise us not to walk in the sun after eleven o'clock nor to drink wine until we had reached our journey's end. The photograph facing this page gives a good idea of our last view of the little town we left with a pang of regret. The splendid movement of the Basque women, and the careful arrangement of their hair,

are well illustrated by the figure of the elder girl on the right.

At a little distance from Guernica the road ascends in a series of wide curves, giving a bird's-eye view of the valley of the Mundaca. Lately, another road of easier gradients has been constructed for the motor omnibus, but we kept to the hills. The surrounding country was much wilder than that we had passed through between Amorebieta and Guernica, wooded on each side of the road with oak and chestnut. Farms were comparatively rare, but the little fields of maize and corn took on a greater value for their dark setting. As we followed the broad, white road we refreshed ourselves with delicious wild strawberries which grew plentifully in crevices of the limestone. At intervals we met people going down to market in Guernica, groups of women stepping out bravely with heavy baskets on their heads, or a timber waggon drawn by a team of oxen, blinking mildly under the crimson fringe of their sheepskin-covered yoke, as they descended the hill with a slow, swaying movement. We passed through two or three villages, each with its little tiled *parróquia*, or parish church, and men and women working in the fields, reaping corn, or tilling the ground with heavy two-pronged mattocks resembling the Cornish "digger." Everybody we passed hailed us with "*Adios!*" or "*Agur!*" and once, instead of the native greeting, a man startled us with "Good morning." He

was a ship's fireman on tramp to Bilbao. At a little lonely tavern on the farther side of the hill we rested and drank *chacoli*. The dark interior, with earthen floor and rude benches and tables, was filled with wood smoke. A black pot was suspended over the fire, and a woman sat beside the open hearth rocking a wooden cradle with her foot.

The motor road rejoins the other at a place called "Tres Cruces," after three crosses by the wayside, and not far from Lequeitio the omnibus passed us in a cloud of dust. With the greater part of our walk behind us, we could afford to smile at the compassionate glances of the passengers. Presently we came in sight of the little fishing town which, but for its red-tiled roofs, bears a startling resemblance to St. Ives. To us, accustomed to the unvarying grey of Cornish villages, it looked wrong somehow to see red roofs so near the sea. As is usual when approaching a place by the sea, the descending road split up into lanes which seemed to run hither and thither in a sudden flurry of excitement. A boy, unasked, politely pointed us out a short cut over a stony by-path, and then we were among narrow streets with a cool air from off the harbour and the familiar sights and smells of a fishing town.

The lie of the place with regard to the points of the compass, the look of the streets and the relative positions of the church and the harbour, were so absurdly like St. Ives that we amused

ourselves by pointing out the houses where our friends live. I suppose the truth is not that Lequeitio looks English but that St. Ives looks foreign. Like St. Ives, Lequeitio has an Island of St. Nicolas—the patron saint of sailors—but here the Island is really an island and not a peninsula, though artificially joined to the mainland at low tide by a raised causeway.

As if to keep up the illusion of our being at home, the charming young landlord of the Fonda de Beitial, overlooking the harbour, responded to my carefully worded inquiry for rooms with: "All right." He had been in England and spoke the language "not a great deal," as he said, but with a surprising mastery of colloquial expressions. His house was very full, he said, but he would be glad to take us in if we didn't mind a rather public bedroom. We assured him that the two beds behind clean white curtains suspended by string across the large airy central *sala* were all that we desired.

The company at luncheon were of a more cultivated and fashionable type than we had yet encountered at our public meals. There were a middle-aged artist, his wife, and a grave young man, his pupil—very like the serious type of art-student at home—and a family of summer visitors from Bilbao, consisting of papa, mamma, two children, and grandmamma. The last had a larger appetite than any old lady I have ever met. By the end of the meal—which included a glorious

lobster salad — every standing dish of biscuits, olives, fruit, and so on had drifted to her end of the table, surrounding her like a rampart. Everybody except the student was very relaxed and informal, as if in a seaside holiday humour. The painter's wife, a large, good-looking, languishing lady, was negligently attired in a pink petticoat and the frankest blouse I have ever seen worn in the daytime. Twice during the meal she drifted into her bedroom, which opened off the *comedor*, leaving the folding doors ajar, still further to simplify her costume, until James began to make sporting proposals as to the extent of the remainder. I fancied that the grave student, who kept his eyes on his plate and left the table before the end of the meal, a little disapproved of her, so possibly her position was less formal than that of a wife.

After a siesta behind the white curtains of the *sala* we went out into the sunlight to explore the town. The church of Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion is very old and extremely beautiful, unusually free from jarring additions, with a *retablo* of dulled gold and a tabernacle of the same workmanship. Externally a curious effect, like that of banks of oars, is produced by a range of flying buttresses on each side of the nave.

The church is overlooked by a little conical mount like the Capstone rock at Ilfracombe. James wanted to finish his siesta on the wall out-

side the church, so I made the ascent alone by a stony path encircling the mount, with "Stations of the Cross" at intervals, and a Calvary at the summit. From here I had a splendid view of the red-roofed little town, backed by the headland of Santa Catalina, which forms the western arm of the bay. Landward a fertile and partially wooded valley ran up among the foot-hills of the Cantabrian Mountains. The heat here reflected from the stony ground was almost overpowering, and the glare was made more dazzling to the eyes by bright patches of valerian. Although it was not yet the middle of July, I picked ripe sloes.

On my descent I found James waking up to an interested audience of small boys, who afterwards did not improve the foreground of a photograph of the church tower. Graceful when unconscious of observation, the Spanish boy becomes the stiffest creature imaginable the moment he is aware of the camera. As we made our way among the narrow streets we began to see and feel all the subtle differences between Lequeitio and the familiar town to which we had compared it; the rich carving under the broad eaves of the tall houses, the innumerable balconies and the fulness of colour in the garments drying upon them. I have never seen such a quantity of "washing" displayed in all my life; the effect was of the preparation for some pageant. Not the least striking difference between this and any English town

STREET; LEQUEITIO

was in the sharp contrast between the old and the new; between the narrow crooked streets of crazy buildings with their blunt, irregular lines, and the trim quays, wide spaces, and clean-cut masonry of the harbour. In the most recently exploited watering-place in England you do not get a sudden jump from the old to the new; the crude villa is linked to the primitive cottage by a series of buildings which are merely old-fashioned and inconvenient, and in practical matters there is always a slight hesitation, as if the authorities, though without reverence for the past, had not quite the courage to accept the advantages of the present. The harbours and their appurtenances of the fishing towns I know in England are all a little behind the needs of the moment, as if hampered by consideration for the lady amateur painter in water colours. But when the Latin is practical he is very practical. Apparently he has never heard of or disregards the convention that comfort and convenience are incompatible with beauty. As a small example, the excellent harbour of Lequeitio is brilliantly lighted at night by acetylene lamps, "made at Willesden," we observed, on tall iron standards. The municipal authorities discovered that they were paying more than they should for the electric light which is used universally throughout the north of Spain, so they adopted acetylene on their own account with a gain both in cheapness and efficiency. Yet in spite of, or, as I prefer to believe, because of, this fearless consideration of practical

needs, Lequeitio is unspoiled; in spite of the piquant contrast between old and new, it escapes the vulgarity of meaningless "improvements." On the other hand, I could name a fishing town and watering-place in England, with twice the population of Lequeitio, which is rapidly being made abominable by the worst type of villa and shops, but where the launching of the lifeboat at a time of peril has been seriously hindered because the half-dozen miserable gas-lamps of the harbour were unlighted.

Lequeitio has its lifeboat conveniently housed in a bright pavilion in the angle of the outer arm of the harbour. As we stood there watching the open lug-sailed hake boats, each with a crew of eight or nine men, come in before a light breeze, we were accosted in polite but broken English by a dapper little man in a linen suit and straw hat, who was accompanied by three summer-clad children, two boys and a girl. After some preliminary compliments he said, "I am the Collector of Customs," adding with a touch of shyness, as if he were not sure that it was the correct form, but meant to risk it, "at your service." He never missed an opportunity, he said, of improving his knowledge of our language, which he was learning from an American gentleman who lived in Lequeitio, and from the *Daily Mail*. Producing a folded copy of the Paris edition of the latter from his pocket, he read out a paragraph about tariff reform with a pronunciation which betrayed the source of

HAKE BOAT; LEQUEITIO

his learning. He offered to take us to that source, but we assured him that we were very happy where we were, and in the company of himself and his children. They were learning English, too, he told us. I'm afraid his idea of a useful education was unfortunately in agreement with that of certain people at home. The little pale, fragile creatures, their dark eyes burning with intelligence, were stood in a row and made to repeat a list of the principal ports of England: "Londón, Leeverpool, Soúfampton, Porrtsmout, Brreestól, Carrdéef, Ool." We spent a very pleasant half-hour with the Collector of Customs and his children, and when we parted he waved his hand and said, again in the shy tone of a person determined to brave the risks of idiom, "Until later."

When the tide fell we crossed to the Island of San Nicolas by a causeway like that which joins St. Michael's Mount to Marazion. The island is an irregular mass of granite with a scrub of gorse and heath and a variety of tiny wild-rose, growing flat to the ground, which I have seen in Cheshire. It is found also, I believe, in some parts of Scotland. From here we had a good view of the hills forming a background to Lequeitio and the inviting cliff road which we were to pursue on the morrow.

A violet dusk was falling when we returned to the town; on the red sands a girls' school in uniform pink dresses danced a *Zortzico* without music. The effect of their silent movements,

with outstretched waving arms, was very strange. Boys were bathing from the steps of the harbour; each crossed himself before he dived. Later, we wandered about the streets and quays by moonlight of a peculiar quality and breadth, in which there were no sharp contrasts of light and shade, but rather a diffused luminosity, as if it were given out from within the objects on which it fell. The acacias on the quays under the tall acetylene lamps flung exquisite wavering shadows like stirring water. Lequeitio goes to bed early. At half-past nine there was hardly a lighted window, and we met less than a dozen people in the streets. Two youths and a gigantic dog, like some hound of dreams, moved swiftly and silently along the quayside. Here and there we heard the quiet voice of a girl, unseen upon a balcony, answered by a man's voice from below.

We had a long and interesting talk with the landlord of the Fonda before we went to bed. When we asked him how he liked England, he said, "I like the English laws." He was a quick, intelligent young man with a slightly worried expression, as if he were haunted by unpleasant memories, and I think he must have had some experience in the past which made him put a high value on bodily safety. He said that Vizcaya was the best governed of the three Basque provinces, adding, "You can go out at one o'clock at night, or you can dance with a girl without fear of a

knife." More than once he spoke with relief of security from the knife. The Spanish Government, he said, appreciates the prosperity of the Basque provinces, but is always on guard against the independent spirit of their inhabitants. A man could be put in prison for talking here. The Basque farms were small but profitable, and most of the farmers owned their land. That was a good thing; he did not like landlords; when he improved his house and put in more bedrooms his landlord had raised his rent. He was a pure Basque; his aunt, to whom he introduced us, could speak barely a word of Spanish.

It was queer to be awakened by a man saying in English that it was six o'clock. I had slept soundly, but James had suffered equally from the mosquitos and the *serenos* or night watchmen. In his broken dreams they were indistinguishable one from the other; the mosquitos chanted the hour, and flew about with lanterns and staves, and several times James was prevented from killing one by the reflection, just when he had raised his hand, that it would be murder to do so. The matter was complicated by somebody having told him that you could kill a man in Spain for five pounds. More than once during the night he counted his money, and I have a hazy recollection of hearing a resounding slap, followed by a sleepy and despairing murmur, "There goes another fiver."

The morning was clear and grey and chilly, with promise of brilliant sunshine later on. We

started early, as we had nearly fourteen miles to walk before noon, when we hoped to catch a train from Deva to Durango. The road, which follows the coast to Deva, leaves Lequeitio by a splendid bridge of a single arch. Before we reached it we passed a fine mansion, surrounded by tall poplar trees. From the stables a groom led a horse with a coronet worked in blue upon its fawn covering. We were told that the place belonged to a countess, and that several notable people had country houses in the neighbourhood of Lequeitio. A few people were bathing in the sea as we crossed the bridge, and we met a group of bare-footed women walking into the town with large, flat baskets of laundry on their heads. A *carabinero* in blue linen uniform and white shako, armed with a rifle, lounged against the parapet of the bridge and watched us thoughtfully as we made our way up the long, gradual ascent.

For some distance the road skirted a belt of pine-trees, apparently enclosing an estate, but we presently came to more primitive country. As on our first day in the provinces, we were strongly reminded of Devonshire, only, instead of red earth, there was everywhere the clear grey of the limestone. The magnificent road, broad and white and smooth, and said to be of Roman origin, curved grandly along the coast, though not always in sight of the sea. The hillside on the right was clothed with pine, chestnut, walnut, and beech; and here and there a silver birch, or a tall blue

A CORNER IN LEQUEITIO

gum, gave a note of distinction, and kept up the general effect of pale tones and aerial delicacy. The morning air was crisp and exhilarating, impregnated with the thin scent of pine and eucalyptus, and made musical by the tinkling of cow bells. At frequent intervals a strongly buttressed stone bridge crossed a ravine with a mountain torrent, white among the rich ferns and mosses, dashing down to the pebbly beaches below. For all the charm of wildness and loneliness there was never lost the special character of the highway, with its human dignity and traditions. There was a stone at every *kilometro*, and in more than one place we came upon two or three men working upon the road, with a board on á standard giving the length of the section under repair, and the district in which it lay. Except for these men, we saw nobody but a few wood-cutters working on the hillside, and no less than four *carabineros*.

The last of these challenged us on a lonely part of the road about five *kilometros* from Ondárroa, which was to be our first halting-place. He was about five feet two, with thin, sandy hair, and a little Dan Leno face, made all the more comical by the stern expression with which he asked to see our passports. I believe we both had an idea that he really was a low comedian, thoughtfully provided by the authorities of this enchanting land for the entertainment of travellers, but that he ought not to have been let out with a rifle. He examined our papers with a gravity which con-

vinced me that he would have been equally well satisfied with a last year's dog licence. In answer to his questions, we gave him a detailed account of our past and future movements, adding, in slightly injured tones, that he was the first man in Spain who had wanted to see our passports.

He was immediately apologetic, and explained that, this being the main road to the frontier, there were many bad characters about, and how was he to know that we were respectable? Besides, there had been a fall of mountain a *kilometro* further on, and with our permission he would conduct us over the dangerous place. His legs being so much shorter than ours, and our time limited, we were disposed to excuse him until it became evident that the pleasant little creature was paying us the compliment of desiring our company. There was nothing further to be said, so we adapted our strides to his, and made conversation in the best Spanish at our command. In pursuit of his general principle of proving that things could be done differently, James was very curious to know if the little man's rifle was really loaded. We turned the conversation upon the relative merits of the Lee-Enfield and the Mauser, and the *carabinero* artlessly threw open the breech of his weapon and showed it empty. We could have disarmed him on the spot, and James's honour was satisfied. As if with an afterthought, however, the *carabinero* opened his pouch and showed us five cartridges in a clip, two packets of cigarettes, and a faded rose.

His name he said, in courteous recognition of having learned our own, was Miguel. He had fought in Cuba, where he had been shot through the thigh — the Spanish soldiers, he said pathetically, were "*muy valientes*" ("very brave"), but!— and now he was guardian of the sea and the land. Here he swept the sea horizon on our left with imaginary field-glasses, and, calling us to the side of the road, with a great air of secrecy showed us a little cubby-house from which, unobserved, he could spy upon travellers.

Presently we came to the place which Miguel had spoken of as "*peligroso.*" There had been a fall of rock, due, said Miguel, to the south-west wind, and the road, which for twenty yards or so had been practically carried away, was rudely shored-up with timber. Miguel made the most of the danger, walking delicately and keeping us well away from the cliff-side.

Spying the camera in my coat pocket, he asked me if I would take his photograph when we came to the *casa-cuartel* or barracks where he was lodged with two companions, which was only three *kilometros* further on. I said that I should be delighted to do so if we had time, but that we were anxious not to miss the train at Deva. There was plenty of time, said Miguel; it was dangerous to walk in the sun after ten o'clock, we must rest and drink water at the *cuartel*, and take the mule coach from Ondárroa to Deva. We could eat well at Ondárroa. There was the most excellent food—

he kissed the tips of his fingers—to be had at the Fonda Aspilza.

The *casa-cuartel* was a long whitewashed building, with a trellised vine, overlooking the sea and surrounded by a little hot garden of maize, beans, potatoes, and pimientas. Entering the "stoop" under the vine, Miguel called loudly, "José, José!" and a lean, middle-aged man, with a grizzled moustache, wearing dark uniform trousers and a grey flannel shirt, appeared. Our friend introduced him to us as his commandant; the lady and three children who now came to the door were the commandant's wife and family. Miguel himself was to marry a certain Margarita—he went through the pantomime of clasping her to his bosom—in September.

He and the commandant talked excitedly together, with many oaths, and presently it appeared that the commandant too desired to be photographed. Also his lady and the children. But they feared that the cost would be excessive.

I explained that the picture would be taken for pleasure and sent from England as a gift. Chairs were brought, and we sat under the vine while the commandant retired to get into his tunic and the lady and children to put on their best clothes.

"I suppose," said Miguel, "that you carry clothes in those bags?" James was about to untie the strings of his rück-sack, but the little gentleman flushed crimson, and, springing to his feet, with an excited gesture bade him desist.

Did we imagine that, after having accepted our friendship, he would be so base as to wish to exercise his privilege of examining the contents of our bags? With difficulty we soothed him and prevailed upon him to accept, with extravagant expressions of joy, a pinch of China tea. He then invited us into his room, where a savoury stew was cooking in an iron pot over the wood fire, and gave us water to drink. Alas! he had no wine; but that, he knowingly intimated, might be remedied later. When we were outside again, he beckoned us mysteriously to a corner of the garden, where there was a little stone building half underground. At first I thought he had a prisoner concealed there, but when I stooped and peered into the shadow I saw three tame rabbits.

When the photograph had been taken, Miguel wrote his full name and address in my pocket-book and made me swear on the word of an Englishman that I would send him three copies, one for himself, one for the commandant, and one for Margarita. If I failed him, he would never trust an Englishman again.

The *carabineros* then formally asked us to be their guests at the tavern where Margarita lived. We bade farewell to the lady and the children, Miguel picked up his rifle, and we set off together. The tavern was a large barn-like building, set back against the cliff, with only a withered bush at the door to show its character. A group of women sat sewing in the shade of a walnut tree, and half-

a-dozen children played round them. Under the rudely carved balcony of unpainted wood, a wide doorway gave to a velvety brown interior.

Margarita, a tall, handsome girl with black hair and brown eyes, wearing a shabby cotton bodice and skirt, came forward on our entrance. Miguel, catching at her hand, made playful feints at a warmer salutation, which she laughingly resisted. The commandant ordered "*Rioja*" wine and the *carabinero* cider, and we found with dismay that we were to suffer their alternate hospitality. To all our protests that we had drunk enough, Miguel only answered:

"A commandant of *carabineros* has plenty of money. And besides, you have only one *kilometro* further to walk. The mule coach at Ondárroa will take you to Deva in a quarter of an hour."

It seemed good to us, emboldened by the wine and the cider, that Margarita should be photographed. At first she was coy, but Miguel and her mother, a brown, wrinkled dame, looking twice her probable age, delightedly pressed her. She retired to change her dress, while Miguel, as one with an interest in the establishment, showed us with pride the black and white Swiss cow which shared the ground floor with the family. Margarita reappeared, looking not near so pretty, in a clean bodice with tight cuffs and collar, and the other women and the children grouped themselves about her. But the prettiest child of all, for no reason that we could understand, and

against our protests, was passionately forbidden to join them. Miguel put aside his rifle, and seizing an axe that was lying near, posed himself in a truculent attitude.

"In England," he said, "they will think that *carabineros* are armed with axes."

The so strangely mingled hospitality of *carabineros* was proving too much for my head, and we insisted firmly that we must go on to Ondárroa. The two jolly fellows accompanied us, Miguel repeating his phrase about the word of an Englishman. When he heard that I was a writer, he begged me to plead the cause of the *carabineros* in the English papers. *Carabineros*, he said, were good men and true, but the Spanish Government was bad, and allowed them only two *pesetas* a day to keep themselves and their families. I don't quite know what I promised, but I have a hazy recollection that I agreed to tell Her Majesty the Queen of Spain, who, said Miguel, was a good Queen and an Englishwoman, that her loyal *carabineros* ought to get more money.

At the top of the hill above Ondárroa we parted from the *carabineros* with embraces—modified to suit insular prejudice, right hands clasped, left resting affectionately on the shoulders—and assurances of lifelong friendship.

Miguel's last word was to remind me of my promise to send him the photographs. In return he swore by all his gods to send me a letter of the most exemplary gratitude. I regret to say that

the sequel illustrates the difference between the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon attitude to the "given word." I sent him the photographs; he did not acknowledge them.

As we descended the hill into the town I felt as if I were walking on pneumatic soles, but the effect of the pure light wine and cider soon passed off. For discretion, however, we avoided the sun and sat down in a cool *portico* hung with fishing-nets in the market-place. We felt that a meal at the Fonda Aspilza would be an anti-climax, so James went off to buy food. He returned with his *boina* full of pears and some curious flat, oval cakes adhering to the sheet of paper on which they had been baked. "I wish you were sober," he said, "because there are a lot of jolly things to photograph round the corner."

Ondárroa is indeed a beautiful little port, well worth a longer visit than the *carabineros* had left us time for. The fine old church, festooned with nets, was not in a position to make a satisfactory photograph at that time of day, but I was able to get a picture of the bridge above the harbour

The coach for Deva started at eleven o'clock from before the Fonda Aspilza. It was drawn by two restive mules, one of which got his hind legs over the traces, and we had to bear a hand in releasing him. Fearing the sun, I preferred to sit in the interior of the coach, where my companions were a commercial gentleman and a little boy going to play in a *Pelota* match at Deva, but

ONDÁRROA

James insisted on sharing the box with the driver. who pointed warningly to his head. James solved the difficulty in his own mysterious way by repeating "*Mucho, mucho* on the box," but I presently saw that the driver had persuaded him to change his *boina* for a wide-brimmed lady's hat of straw, with the price upon it, which he was taking to a customer in Deva.

We had only a passing glimpse of Motrico, which is on the boundary between Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa. The pretty little town takes its name from a rock resembling a hedgehog, *tricu* being the Basque name for that animal. Motrico was the birthplace of the brave Admiral Churruca who was killed at Trafalgar; there is a statue to his memory in the Plaza.

Miguel's quarter of an hour turned out to be an hour and a quarter; and we reached Deva, with its wide river and open streets, only just in time for our train. It was pleasant to renew our acquintance with the little mad railway by which we had travelled on the day of our arrival. The towns and villages through which we passed had only gained in charm from closer knowledge; we looked out for the names of stations—Mendaro, Elgoibar, Eibar, Ermua—beforehand, with a feeling of proprietary interest, as the train danced along, for me, at least, to a movement out of Liszt's 3rd Rhapsody. The late summer exodus of the fashionable world of Spain to the cool watering-places of the North had begun. At

Malzaga we pulled up alongside a train going to San Sebastian; the look of the first-class passengers, bored with their newspapers, heavy-eyed with the heat, leaning out of the windows for air, confirmed our opinion that, reasons of economy apart, we had chosen well to share the company of those who, in the dignified meaning of the term, are called the common people.

As we entered the now familiar mountain-guarded valley of the Durango, boys bathing in the brown water of the river shouted up at the train as if to welcome us, and in a few minutes we were at the station, overlooked by the high wall of the *fronton*, with glittering peaks beyond it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ORIGIN OF THE BASQUE LANGUAGE—A WHITE NIGHT—THE EAGLE OF DURANGO—TO CLIMB AMBOTO

DURANGO lies on a small river of the same name in the heart of Vizcaya. In 1901 the population was less than five thousand, and I should not think it had increased considerably during the succeeding years. Durango, though commercially a more important place than Guernica, looks sleepier and bears fewer traces of recent enlargement. Its charm is the stationary charm of a market town with all the business it wants in a local manufacture of wood and copper vessels and articles of leather. The historical traditions of Durango are too recent and disturbing in their associations to be reflected openly, as at Guernica, in the manner and speech of its inhabitants, for it was, and I believe still is, the principal centre of Carlism. Not that we saw any traces of disaffection, but we received the impression that the people of Durango are too closely and practically concerned with the idea of nationalism to be conscious, as are the people of Guernica, of the picturesque side of it. They are not hypnotised by the Tree. The streets are clean and architecturally attractive,

and barred by views of the Cantabrian Mountains looking—as we were afterwards to prove—deceptively near.

There is a most beautiful old church, of San Pedro de Tavira, with an immense *portico*, measuring, roughly, eighty by twenty-five yards, supported by single-span timber arches, and inoffensively lighted by electricity. The surrounding streets prevent a satisfactory photograph being taken of the church as a whole, and but for the kindness of a shopkeeper who allowed me to make use of his balcony, I should have been unable to secure that reproduced on the opposite page.

We found comfortable rooms at the Fonda Olmedal, which looks out on the large Paseo, planted with plane and mulberry trees, and backed by the *fronton*. At every hour of the day we found somebody playing *Pelota* here; between the trains the stationmaster and porters came over in a body to practise the game. I asked a native how the men of Durango employed themselves; what work they did. For some time he did not seem to understand my question, and I began to think that I had been indiscreet, but finally, striking his brow, with a sudden light of comprehension in his eye, he exclaimed:

"Ah, what do they do?—the men of Durango? They play *Pelota*."

We dined in the company of half-a-dozen commercial travellers, pleasant, intelligent men, three of whom were going on by coach to Vitoria at

THE PORTICO; DURANGO. (EXTERIOR)

half-past four the next morning. The head of the table was taken by the proprietor of a marble quarry somewhere up in the mountains. He had travelled all over the world, and was extremely interested in speculations about the origin of the Basque language. At least a dozen words, he said, were identical in Basque and Japanese. I suppose there is no subject more full of pitfalls for the unlearned than that of comparative philology, but there certainly seems to be strong evidence that the Basque language, like the Hungarian, the Chinese, and the Japanese, is of Turanian origin. When on an earlier page I remarked upon the superficial resemblance between printed Basque and printed Hungarian, I did not know that the latter language was held by philologists to belong to the Turanian family, nor had I read the chapter on the *Euskara* or Basque in Borrow's "Bible in Spain," so that the resemblance is marked enough to strike a person ignorant of the theories on the subject. The hint of something else which I alluded to is precisely of Japanese. I have never heard Japanese spoken, but I believe that if during the time of the Russo-Japanese war a verse of a Basque song such as *Iru damacho*[1] had been printed

[1] Iru damacho Donostiyako
Irurak gona gorriyak
Sartutzen dira tabernarata
Irtetzen dira ordiyak
Eta kriskitin kraskitin
Arrosa krabelin
Irtetzen dira ordiyak.

in an English newspaper, ninety-nine readers out of a hundred would have taken it for something Japanese. But it is not only the Basque language which contains these tantalising hints of the Mongolian. The people themselves, with their impassive, high cheek-boned faces, as Borrow observed, look like Tartars, and there is something irresistibly Chinese about a Basque farmer, in his flat cap and sad blue garments, patiently cultivating every inch of soil, and planting three crops where we should be content to grow one. On referring to a history of music I find the Basque instruments, the *dúlsinya* and the *tamboril*, almost exactly reproduced in the Chinese *yo* and *ya-kou*. These comparisons are tempting and suggestive, but the subject as a whole is better left to the specialist.

In addition to his remarks on language and history, our friend the quarry-owner told us many interesting things about affairs of the moment. Hearing that we were going to Burgos, he said that we must on no account miss the Convent of Las Huelgas and the monastery of La Cartuja. We laid our plans before him for revision, telling him frankly the time and money at our disposal. On consideration, he did not think it was worth our while stopping at Valladolid, as we had first intended to do, and between Segovia and Toledo he had no hesitation in advising the latter. "Spend as much time as you can in Toledo," he said, "it is one of the most wonderful cities in Europe." From time to time he would consult with one of

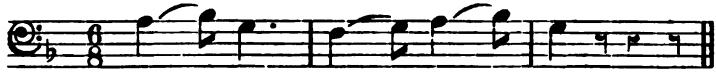
the other men at the table, who all seemed to take a personal interest in our plans, recommending hotels and the choice of trains. They professed astonishment at our progress with their language, and gave us an informal little lesson, making us repeat over and over again the names of articles on the table.

We spent the evening wandering about the pleasant streets of the town. Always we came back to the wide *portico* of the church, where the arc lamps made a moonlight of their own. Men and women, in twos and threes, with linked arms, walked soberly up and down the *portico*, talking with the quiet earnestness which seemed to be the note of the place. On the wall of the church is affixed a notice forbidding *Pelota* to be played there. As we returned to the Fonda, the *serenos* or night-watchmen were turning out of their guard-house. With their long, hooded cloaks, tipped staves, and lanterns, they looked like supers preparing to go on the stage for the opening scene of an opera.

There followed for me one of the most perfect nights in my memory. For some reason I did not sleep at all, and I had no wish to sleep, nor was I conscious of the negative condition of sleeplessness, but only of an intense desire to live through every moment and to extract the last flavour of the uneventful hours. It was in the double meaning a "white night," with an unclouded though tempered moonlight and a pure air from off the

mountains that was very cold but without bitterness. Cold had become a new and wholly pleasurable sensation, as if appreciated by a new set of nerves. Time after time I was drawn to the balcony by a feeling that was not restlessness but rather the positive of rest, as if the resting consciousness of every day were happily watched over by some clairvoyant intelligence outside the body. The moonlit Paseo was gently alive with the plash of a fountain and the shivering of mulberry leaves, and there came up to me that indefinable drug-like odour which is the smell of Spain. Every half-hour a *sereno* passed under my window, chanting the hour in a phrase without beginning or ending, with the lilt of a man's walk in it, so strangely eloquent of time passing that it might have been the music of Time itself for a moment made audible to heightened senses.

Andante e molto legato.



Las tres y clar - ro.

At a quarter past three a door opened a little way down the street, and a sleepy ostler carrying a lantern dragged his feet over the cobble-stones, and I presently heard him grumbling to his horses as they stirred in their stable. Exactly at the half-hour a cock crowed, and there was an alteration in the quality of the moonlight; a loss of

poignancy as when a melody is lowered from C sharp to the natural key; and then the mountain peaks, hitherto silvery, began to darken against a pale dawn. Unobserved on my balcony I watched the coach start for Vitoria. The gruff monosyllables of the muffled-up commercial travellers contrasted amusingly with their genial flow of conversation at table the night before. At five o'clock the church bells were ringing for early mass, and when an hour or so later we went out into the exquisite morning air, the market-women were already arranging their baskets of sardines, cheeses, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, cherries, apricots, and peaches under the shadow of the *portico* and in the triangular open space before it. For business and pleasure the *portico* is the centre of Durango.

We had yet to learn exactly how good were the food and lodging at the Fonda Olmedal. After morning coffee I was idly looking out of the balconied window of the long dining-room, when my attention was caught by something moving on the roof of a little green summer-house among the plane trees in the yard below. The object was bunchy and speckled and obviously alive. Being against the brilliant morning sun, its exact size and shape were difficult to determine. I was just thinking that it looked rather large for a hen, when——

It was an eagle!

There was something oddly reproachful in the

blood-rimmed, unwinking eye that stared into mine from amidst those banal, backyard surroundings. Hastily descending to the café, I asked the waiter if I had been mistaken. No, he said, it really was an eagle.

"He came down from the mountains twenty—thirty years ago with an injured wing, and he has been here ever since."

He took me into the yard to have a better look at the king of birds. There was something in its appearance—the bald head, the hooked beak, the bloodshot eye—which reminded me irresistibly of an aged veteran—say a colonel of the Old Guard. Seeing that I was interested, the bird shuffled along the ridge and made an effort to flap its wings. I had the ashamed feeling which one suffers on seeing a fine and dignified character in humiliating circumstances, but, in spite of that, some tourist instinct set me hankering to take the bird's photograph.

"Could you persuade him to move into a better position?" I asked the waiter. He shook his head.

"*No, Señor*; he comes down only to eat and drink."

He pointed to a trough in a corner of the yard, a little iron trough such as kindly shopkeepers provide for the use of puppy-dogs.

That ought to have touched me, but I went to get my camera. When I returned the waiter was gone. The eagle looked cautiously around,

coughed, and—if I may be believed—said hoarsely but affably:

"Want to take my picture—hey?"

"If you wouldn't very much mind," I stammered.

"Not at all," he said. "I've got a touch of gout—but still. How's that—hey?"

With an immense effort he half spread his wings, protruded his withered neck, and, wobbling uncertainly on his perch, called up a dull glow into his rheumy eye.

The effect was pitiful. I hastily snapped the shutter and thanked him. I am glad to record, by the way, that the picture was a complete failure.

"Well," said the eagle, "and how do you like Durango?"

I said that I was charmed with the place and the people, and added a compliment to the Fonda Olmedal.

"Yes, yes," said the bird testily, "they do me pretty well. A little too much *merluza*—hake, you know—and the lamb isn't quite what it was in Fr—but I can't grumble. Stopping here long?"

I told him that I was going by coach to Vitoria on the following afternoon.

"Ah, Vitoria," he said; "I got pinked in the liver-wing at Vitoria. . . . You will travel by the road that He made," he added dreamily.

"Who—?" I began.

"The Emperor!"

"Then you really are——"

"Ssh! They must never know that I am a Frenchman. It's a long story, but—well, well, you know," he said apologetically, "one can't keep up a feud for ever, and your people—no offence, you fought fair—having broken his heart at St. Helena, there was no reason—was there?—why an old soldier should not look out for himself."

He told me many and interesting things that only lack of space prevents my recording. There had been fighting since he had lived at Durango.

"I have seen a thousand Carlists camped in the *portico* behind there," he said.

When I took leave of him, he said with some embarrassment: "There's just one little thing. When the waiter—good fellow, Pedro, but a bit forgetful—brings you your coffee after dinner, there will be at least five pieces of sugar. Have you a very sweet tooth? I'm getting an old bird, you know, and a bit of sugar——"

I understood, and promised him that the matter should be attended to.

The Fonda Olmedal at Durango can boast a distinction which, so far as I know, is enjoyed by no other hotel in the whole world. It is so comfortable that an eagle of the Pyrenees—and a French eagle at that—has lived there for more than thirty years a willing pensioner.

When James returned from a solitary ramble round the town, he made unworthy remarks about

THE PORTICO; DURANGO. (INTERIOR)

WHITE OXEN; DURANGO

the soporific effects of sunlight and cigarettes, but he could not explain away the eagle. The sunlight, indeed, was brilliant enough to keep us in the fashion of Durango by spending the best part of the morning in the *portico* of the church, where we enjoyed the company of a very intelligent little boy of eleven, who was learning English "out of a little book" under the guidance of his father. At intervals, with a sense of daring, we would make a little excursion to take a photograph, or to watch the shoemakers and coppersmiths at work in the Artecalle. This name, which we came across in several towns, means, I suppose, "the street of the arts," in the sense of handicrafts; and the effect of the little, cool, dark interiors, with a man in the background actually engaged in making the goods displayed in the window, is homely and friendly, recalling what one has read about the Indian bazaar. More than once we found ourselves regretting the necessity for travelling light. At the shop of Castor Menchega, "*calderero*" (or coppersmith), I could have bought a beautiful copper cauldron, shaped like a gipsy kettle and admirably decorated with a herring-bone "tooling," for seventeen *pesetas*—about twelve shillings. In the *zapateros*, or shoemakers, were being made a delightfully simple footgear called *albarkas*, consisting of a leaf-shaped piece of hide with the perforated edges turned up, and threaded with a blue tape or ribbon to draw the whole together and fasten round the ankle. These were made in all

sizes, from great *sabot*-looking affairs to the tiniest little trotter-cases of softest leather.

The Artecalle of Durango leads in a direct line from the *portico* to the beautiful gateway shown in the photograph facing this page. This gives on the river and the main road to Vitoria. Four main roads leave Durango, and as each looked equally inviting and led apparently to mountains, James and I spent an hour lazily debating which we should choose for our afternoon walk. The silvery peak which peered so insistently over the high wall of the *Pelota* court finally decided us to take the road leading to Vitoria.

Amboto is a little mountain as mountains go, being not quite four thousand feet. Neither of us, however, had climbed a mountain before, and so we said that we would climb Amboto. As when, at three o'clock, we passed through the gateway at the end of the Artecalle, and, taking the road pictured at the end of this chapter, came in full view of the pearly-grey limestone peak, with its necklace of chestnut trees and sweeping skirts of maize, corn, and vines, we calculated how long it would take us to reach the top. An hour and a quarter—say three hours there and back. That would bring us home in good time for dinner. There was no hurry; meanwhile we would see whatever there was to be seen on the road.

There was the church of Izurza, for example. We found the padre of Izurza sitting on a log in the shade of walnut trees reading the *Diario del*

GATEWAY : DURANGO

Norte. He was a little, weak-eyed, stubbly man in a stained gown, with a queer, smiling, furtive manner.

"You are Englishmen," he said unnecessarily, and invited us to sit beside him on the log. He asked us how much tobacco we had, but when we offered him some declined it, and laughed knowingly. As he talked he drew with the point of his stick in the dust a curious diagram, which he effaced and repeated several times. This being the heart of the Carlist country, it occurred to me that the padre wanted to find out on which side our sympathies lay; that the allusion to tobacco was a blind, and the diagram a secret sign. His manner, when we assured him that we were travelling merely for pleasure, was one of polite incredulity, with a sly hint that we might safely give him our confidence. He was particularly anxious to know what we did, and somehow arrived at the conclusion, satisfactory to himself, that we were carpenters. It was much too hot to dispute the point, though, even in this, there was the tantalising suggestion that he had used the word "carpenters" symbolically, as if he had said, "You are Masons."

We asked him if we might look at his little church, which was locked. He rose, and taking us to the side door of a large house—a *palacio*, he called it—with magnolias in the garden, pulled the bell-wire. The door was opened by a small, dark, sharp-featured lady of uncertain age, whom he introduced as "*mi patrona*," and from whom he

received the key of the church as if her permission to make use of it were something of a favour.

The church, on entering which the padre gave us the Holy Water rather quizzically, was a tiny building with whitewashed walls bulging outward, and a black wooden gallery. Under the altar, which had a glazed front, lay a life-sized effigy of the martyred patron with his wounds upon him. The place was hung with an extraordinary collection of votive offerings; tinsel flowers, braids of hair, wax models of limbs, bandages and images. The gaudy *retablo* contained several figures of saints, and the padre asked us our Christian names, so that he might point out our patrons. James, of course, was settled in a moment, but for some time it seemed as if I were to go unsainted. The good padre stood with his forefinger to the side of his nose—the action which in Spain expresses cogitation, caution, and half-a-dozen other things. Finally his face lit up, and he cried:

"Ah—San Carlos—Borromeo!" We said the last word together and gripped hands as he patted me on the shoulder in sincere congratulation.

We sat on the log again, took snuff, and talked with that half-comprehension of each other's meaning which makes conversation even about trivial matters in a strange tongue a series of excited pursuits of the illuminating word, brow-beatings of despair, and sudden triumphs, as if human speech were being made over again. A shrine under the trees across the way, with a slot for offerings, the

padre dismissed as "*una pequeña cosa*" ("a little affair"), with a polite wave of his hand as if to absolve us from giving. He asked us many questions about England. Was it true, for example, that in England the matches were so—he measured off about six inches—long?

"This," said James sententiously, "is very interesting, but it is not mountains."

I asked the padre how long it would take us to climb Amboto.

"I do not know," he said; "it is in the next parish. But here comes my brother of Mañaria."

The strange figure of a priest was approaching us along the hot, white road. He was tall and bulky, he carried a stout stick, and he rolled in his walk. He was accompanied by a little dog, which looked as if some humorous person had made fun of the idea of a pointer. Its colour was flea-bitten pink, it had scalloped ears, red eyes, and a tassel at the end of its tail.

The priest roared a salutation from afar. When he came nearer I saw that he had a countenance which could only be described as volcanic. It was inflamed and covered with little knobs which pointed in every direction. When he talked, or rather shouted, he foamed at the mouth.

"To climb Amboto?" he said in reply to his brother of Izurza; "*Vaminos!*"

He swung round and we set off together to climb Amboto; the padre of Izurza, the padre of Mañaria with his little dog "Lish"—I will not be

responsible for the spelling—and two wandering Englishmen, who for the time were carpenters. The coach to Vitoria, by which we were to travel on the morrow, drawn by three horses abreast, passed us in a cloud of dust with a flash of eyes and teeth and a glow of crimson flowers from the curtained interior; two Civil Guards, walking in single file a dozen paces apart, saluted us gravely; the reapers in the fields waved to us and cried "*Agur!*" which is the Basque form of "*Adios!*" We were like a procession out of Lewis Carroll.

After an hour we were not appreciably nearer Amboto, though the mountain, so to speak, made no effort at concealment. It simply retired. There was nothing but hot air between us and the lower slope, where goats were feeding. The glittering peak above a belt of woodland looked ironical upon a pure blue sky; and two birds, which looked like ravens but from their size must have been eagles, sailed grandly round it. The padre of Mañaria stopped suddenly and rubbed his brow with a red pocket-handkerchief.

"My body," he roared, extending his hands piteously, "there is too much of it! In Mañaria we will find a *chico*—a little boy. He no doubt will guide you. *Arriba, arriba*—up, up!"

But in Mañaria we found the Casa Municipal, which was tavern, school, and public offices in one. The afternoon, as I said, was hot, the wine good, and the company better. Besides, was there not always "*mañana?*"

After a merely formal conviviality the padre of Izurza blessed us and withdrew, but his brother of Mañaria did the honours of the place with explosive good-humour. He showed us the little children at their lessons, the Swiss cow, the small shop where bacon and cheese were sold, and three grave young men who were busy about some official papers in an upper room. He was proudest of all of a huge stalactite, weighing about a hundredweight, which had been found in a neighbouring cavern. "It is yours!" he cried with outspread arms, when we had sufficiently admired it.

At Mañaria there are "Stations of the Cross" by the wayside leading to a Calvary in a little chapel with a wonderful gate of wrought iron. There are quarries in the neighbourhood from which were taken the black marble columns of the chapel of the Royal Palace at Madrid. The village, overhung by the wooded slopes of mountains, was the scene of a battle in 1872 in which the Carlists were beaten.

We loitered on the way home, lying full length on a low wall beside the river, lulled by the sleepy murmur of a weir, the sighing of round-headed pines, and the tinkle tinkle of cow-bells as the mild beasts trod softly in the thick white dust of the roadway. A pleasant smell of burning was in the air. Our unregretted failure to climb Amboto was only another symptom of the subtle contentment that was growing upon us. Why should we climb Amboto? "Why, in fact," said James,

"should we do anything when we could live in this pleasant land for about three shillings a day?" England and its business seemed a very long way off. We talked of our friends, wondering compassionately what they were doing at this hour.

On the outskirts of Durango we met the little padre of Izurza walking with a tall young man dressed in the English fashion in a light grey flannel suit and straw hat.

"You have climbed Amboto?" said the padre slyly.

"*Mañana*," we replied together.

His companion, who was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen, with dark, soft eyes in a pale, refined face, addressed us in English. He spoke our language perfectly, with a delicacy of intonation which gave it a new charm. He asked us about our plans, wishing that he could come with us. There was in his manner, and particularly in his smile, a curious melancholy as if he had learned patience from the contemplation of lost causes. Later in the evening we met the pair again, pacing arm in arm up and down the *portico* in earnest conversation, and we wondered if between this gentle-voiced young aristocrat—for so he appeared—and the shabby little padre there was some romantic adventure like that of the Jacobites in England. Time after time we were told that Carlism in Spain is dead, but the impression we received in Durango and other places in the Basque provinces was that of a people waiting.

ROAD TO VITORIA; DURANGO

CHAPTER IX

THE ECCENTRICITIES OF ENGLISHMEN—THE PADRE OF IZURZA—VICENTE, THE COACH-DRIVER—THE ASCENT OF AMBOTO—URQUIOLA—THE PROVINCE OF ÁLAVA—OCHANDIANO—MANUEL, THE WOODMAN—VILLAR-REAL—A "FAUX PAS"—NEW CHARACTER OF CHURCHES—THRESHING-FLOORS—VITORIA

THE coach to Vitoria left Durango at half-past three in the afternoon. When I went to book our seats at a little office near the Fonda, a fat man, who was to be our fellow-passenger, chaffed me about the wealth of Englishmen.

"You must have a lot of money," he said in effect, "to be able to go from Durango to Vitoria, twenty-seven miles, by coach, merely for the fun of the thing."

He was of that peculiarly offensive type, found I suppose in every nation under the sun, to whom a well-filled purse is a matter of such reverence that it can only be spoken of with nods and winks and hoarse chuckles and slappings of the pocket.

"Englishmen," said the grave man who sold the tickets, "travel all over the world, on foot, for pleasure." He waited a moment and then, as if

the statement were incredible, added impressively, "I have seen it."

We had some difficulty in persuading the driver of the coach that we preferred to ride outside, and he grumbled a little as he rearranged the luggage to make room for us. The fat man and his companion, who was a rather prim-looking lady, evidently thought that, as persons of wealth and so desirable acquaintances, we were very unfriendly in not joining them in the interior.

The driver was a poorly-dressed young man of about twenty-five, with a lowering expression and bloodshot eyes. For the first half-mile he sat with his chin on his breast and said nothing. Hang-dog looks and rough manners, as we so often found in this country, covered the simple friendliness of a child. We did not make much headway with him, however, until he had satisfied himself that we were *buen' católicos*, when he accepted cigarettes, told us that his name was Vicente, and began shyly to ask the names of things in English. Between his questions he droned an impromptu chant about the weather, his commissions by the way, and the personal characters of the three horses which were harnessed abreast. Occasionally he would interrupt the song with harsh cries of encouragement that sounded like "*Volú, volú, volú!*" and a savage cut with the long whip.

As we passed through Izurza the little padre sat on the log under the walnut trees still reading the *Diario del Norte*. He looked up, waved his

hand, and cried, half in question, half in valediction:

"*Á Vitoria!*"

Outside the Casa Municipal at Mañaria three more horses were waiting in the road to be hooked on abreast for the long ascent to Urquiola, at the summit of a mountain pass between Amboto and its loftier brother Gorbea, which is the highest peak in the Basque provinces. This pass may be looked upon as one of the gateways from the north coast to the raised interior of Spain through the Cantabrian Mountains, which are practically continuous with the Pyrenees. South of a line drawn through Amboto and Gorbea, and forming the boundary between Vizcaya and Álava, the land slopes gradually into the Concha or "Bay" of Álava, in the centre of which lies the town of Vitoria.

The ascent begins immediately beyond Mañaria and continues for about six *kilometros* in a series of noble curves. Vicente took a crumpled newspaper from his pocket and allowed his team to pick their own way up the hill. Now and again, when they had cunningly reduced the angle of their zig-zag progress so that we were almost at a standstill, he would wake up and passionately revile their morals. The three wheelers were Spanish, he said, and at least knew what he thought of them; but the leaders were Frenchmen. They did not understand Spanish; they only understood the whip. Vicente's handling of this weapon, by the way, illustrated the *cliché* of romancers who make their

heroes "pick a fly from the off leader's ear." I saw him do it more than once. The flies, which James, who is learned in such matters, declared to be of a species peculiar to the New Forest, were discriminating and ignored the lean Spaniards to settle upon the sleek Frenchmen. At a sharp turn of the road Vicente pointed, with a grim chuckle, to a breach in the wall overhanging a precipice which, he said, was made by a runaway motor. Nobody was hurt, however.

The magnificent scenery, in violent light and shade, reminded one of the pictures of Salvator Rosa. We saw no living creature except a few goats, but occasionally we heard the report of a gun in the thick woods on the mountain-side, and it would not have seemed surprising if we had been suddenly surrounded by a band of brigands. At this time of year, however, nothing fiercer than a rabbit inhabits these woods, though we heard that wolves are not uncommon in winter. Very slowly we ascended above the oaks, chestnuts, and walnuts, into a region of pines and polled beeches. Above and a little to the left was the bare peak of Amboto, from which a cold wind was blowing.

At six o'clock, with a team of six horses, we had just reached Urquiola, on the shoulder of the mountain we had set out so gaily to climb between lunch and dinner on the previous afternoon. We waited for a few minutes at the splendidly situated and well-named Hotel de Buenos Aires, where we dropped a mail-bag and left the three French

A MOUNTAIN ROAD

horses. Close behind us was another coach full of people, who, said Vicente, were probably going to stop at a sanatorium in the neighbourhood. The sanctuary of San Antonio Abad, which lies a little to the left, is the scene of a pilgrimage on June 13. A huge basilica, which actually encloses the present church, is being built entirely by contributions from the peasantry. We were told that they feel the strain severely, but, as I remarked before, a system of religion which—to use the formula adopted by Professor James in "Varieties of Religious Experience"—seems to "work" so well in its effect upon the lives of the people, is worth the expense.

Now we began to descend through a country entirely different from that on the north side of the mountains. Instead of the rugged hills and savage glens there were wide grass lands and fields of corn. At a large model farm to the left of the road a herd of Swiss cows were grazing.

So far as one can judge from a coach ride through the heart of it, Álava is the tamest and least interesting of the Basque provinces. In character as in position, it forms a connecting link between the Alpine beauty of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa and the weird monotony of the Castiles, while missing the special charm of either.

Vicente became more talkative with each *kilometro* of the descent. He was not very intelligent, but he made heroic attempts to learn the English name of everything within sight. I believe he had an idea that he could learn enough English in the

course of the journey to go to London and drive a bus, which was the height of his ambition. Occasionally he would look at us with an appealing smile on his harsh features and say, timidly, "My frien's." He was married, he said, and had three children, and he looked a little weighed-down by family cares. His home was at Villar-real, nine miles from Vitoria, where he would have to leave us; a new driver and fresh horses would take us on to the end of our journey.

My memory of Ochandiano, the first village in Álava, is that of a long, narrow, cobbled street of broad-eaved houses in a cool twilight smelling of new-mown hay. The tall bell-tower of the church overlooks a wide *plaza* where boys were playing *Pelota*. For some unaccountable reason, unless as a symbol of the sulphur springs in this neighbourhood, the *plaza* is decorated with a little iron statue of Vulcan. Vicente drank wine with us in a low-browed *tienda* which had all the look of a general shop in an English village. Beyond Ochandiano the grass country gives place to woodland, the trees, beginning with a double row of beeches beside the road, thickening and darkening into masses of pines like those of the Landes. A broad, shallow, grass-grown trench to the left of the road, continuing for several miles, puzzled us until Vicente told us that it was the bed of a railway projected by or in the interests of the ubiquitous English miner. There were other traces of his occupation in the shape of reddened

water issuing from a broken conduit, but so far as I know there is no mining carried on in this neighbourhood now, though there are several bathing establishments for the use of mineral waters.

At a cross-road we pulled up to allow the passage of a timber waggon accompanied by a band of high-spirited young men. In place of a driver they had set up a scarecrow figure of two crossed sticks and a blouse and *boina*. Two sturdy Civil Guards waited at the corner, and their broad, good-humoured faces lit up with childlike pleasure when Vicente gave them letters from his post-bag. One of the woodmen, a lissom young fellow with laughing eyes and a dare-devil swagger, wearing a broad red sash round his waist and a jacket hanging hussar-fashion from his shoulders, swung himself up beside us. He greeted Vicente affectionately, and was introduced to us as Manuel, "my frien'." Manuel stared for a moment at the unfamiliar words and then burst into a roar of laughter; but Vicente was not to be discouraged, and with a knowing smile pointed to his beasts and said "'orses." His friend now tumbled to the situation, and, slapping him delightedly on the back, made him go through his newly acquired vocabulary. The comradeship between the two young men, the one quick-witted and fancy-free, the other comparatively dull and a little oppressed by family cares, was very charming to see. Manuel, tapping the seat, asked the English for *madera*. "Wood," we told him, and, with a mischievous

cock of his eyes, he touched Vicente on the head and said "Wud!" What pleased him more than anything, however, was being able to tell us the exact relationship, which we had for the moment forgotten, between the Queen of Spain and our own sovereign.

On the outskirts of Villar-real, Vicente pointed to a very poor dwelling, little better than a hovel, and said, "*Su casa*" ("Your," that is to say, "My house"). Three little children ran from the door as we passed; two of them greeted Vicente with cheers, but the third and youngest, wearing only a shirt, fled before us with outstretched arms and stumbling footsteps down the village street, while the people at their doors yelled with laughter. A woman caught up the child and bade him look at his father, and he soon recovered from his attack of—literally—"stage-fright."

Villar-real was all misty and fragrant with the blue smoke of burning wood hanging low in the evening air. Vicente introduced us to his wife and children. The whole scene, the unembarrassed family affection, the friendly neighbours at their doors, and the look of contented poverty about the houses, was the nearest approach to what writers call "idyllic" that I have seen in real life. Manuel, who was evidently the popular scapegrace of the village, insisted that while the horses were changing we must share a parting glass with him and Vicente. He took us into a *tienda* and called for a jug of wine, which we drank in brotherly fashion

out of the same tumbler. The occasion showed us how careful the stranger has to be of the personal dignity of these friendly people. James and I agreed that the good fellow mustn't be allowed to pay for the wine, and when his back was turned I, being purse-bearer, put a *peseta* down on the counter. At that moment Manuel turned round and I shall never forget his "*No, Señor!*" or the gesture with which he swept the coin aside. Oddly enough, almost the next moment I was guilty of a more serious *faux pas*. Somebody in the street spoke to Vicente through the doorway, and he told us sadly that it was time we returned to our seats on the coach. I said involuntarily "*Qué lastima!*" ("What a pity!"), and on the words the person entering turned abruptly and went out. He was the new driver, and my unguarded remark had reflected upon his pride. Although in my remorse I laid hands upon him, he would not be persuaded to drink with us, as he had evidently intended to do, and it was not for some time after we had started that he emerged from a sullen silence and accepted a cigarette.

Night was falling as we left Villar-real and the air was very cold. Before us lay the long, straight, white road bordered with immense poplars, and flanked with apparently unending fields of corn—a type of country that we were to see reproduced mile after mile in Old and New Castile. We passed through several villages with alluring names—Gojain, Urbina, Luco, and Miñano—half seen

in a dusk that was more violet by contrast with the pale yellow sea of corn. Quite beautifully, the most prominent features in each village were the church and the threshing-floor — the latter a very shallow circular depression by the roadside, mealy from the last treading. Already we noticed a striking change in the appearance of the churches; the characteristic *portico* and domed lantern were gone, and the tower was merely finished off with a pyramidal roof of tiles. In most cases there were no windows at all to the north and east. Looking back, the Cantabrian Mountains, rising to grandeur in the peaks of Amboto and Gorbea, made a purple barrier against a clear sunset. Presently the lights of Vitoria began to twinkle among the poplars ahead; we crossed a bridge, swung round a corner, and clattered into a wide open space to the wailing of bugles. Somewhere out of sight soldiers were changing guard.

Soldiers, indeed, and the orderly traces of military occupation are appropriately enough the "note" of the place which will always be associated in English minds with Wellington's famous victory. We had hardly put down our rück-sacks in a bedroom looking into the pleasant little garden of the Hotel Pallarés, when a chambermaid brought us an official paper to fill up with our names, ages, occupations, reasons for being in the country, last resting-place, and destination. I think we both recognised, then, what we afterwards found to be true, that on arriving at Vitoria we had definitely

ended an experience. Whatever of beauty or interest we were afterwards to see, with whatever hospitality we were to be received, it was a different beauty and interest, a not less real but more formal hospitality. We had said good-bye to a place and a people that were fundamentally different from the rest of Spain.

The general impression I retain of an all too short experience of the Basque provinces, is of an almost perfect country for a summer walking tour that does not pretend to be mountain-climbing and is not a gaping quest of "lions." The villages are at convenient distances, and each one has an interest of its own; living is cheap, the roads are good, and, by the way, admirably adapted for cycling, and the climate is temperate. There are opportunities, too, for the pursuit of the special hobbies of the landscape painter, the botanist, the fisherman—if I am lucky enough to go there again I shall take a trout-rod—and the student of out-of-the-way customs and languages. And, as I have so often remarked, the people are among the most charming in the world. In spite of a merely elementary knowledge of the language, and that unreadiness which comes of a limited experience of foreign countries in general, I have never felt more at home amongst any people with whom I have come in contact.

After dinner we turned out into the wide, clean streets to look for a café. We found one full of soldiers playing cards—officers and privates to-

gether. At intervals a piano in a corner started playing of its own accord, as if to call attention to its existence. Two grave, elderly waiters, with white moustaches, rolled like sea-lions among the little tables.

CHAPTER X

VITORIA—SANTA MARIA AND THE VILLA SUSO—THE BATTLEFIELD OF VITORIA — MIRANDA DE EBRO — CIVIL GUARDS—THE RED-HEADED GIRL—THE PASS OF PANCORBO —"AGUA FRESCA!"—THE PLAINS OF OLD CASTILE—THE BEGGARS OF BURGOS—A CONFUSION OF TONGUES—BURGOS CATHEDRAL—THE COFFER OF THE CID—THE ENGLISHMAN OF BURGOS—"BURGOS S'AMUSE"—"A WEE BIT HEATHER"—THE TIMID GENTLEMAN

VITORIA has been compared to an English town. I can't say that the comparison strikes me as a very happy one, but on reflection I am at a loss to find a better description of the capital of Álava. The reason, I think, is that it is a little wanting in character; it might be English because it is not remarkably "foreign." It might, in fact, as James remarked, "be anywhere." In trying to describe Vitoria one thinks unconsciously rather of the important events with which it is connected, as one might say of a person that he is not remarkable in himself, but something remarkable happened to him. One says of the town, too, as one might say of such a person, that it holds an important position. Indeed, the mind jumps at that with relief, as at having found something definite, and goes on

to consider Vitoria from the military point of view. It is not far from the frontier, it holds the main line of railway to the capital, and commands the mountain passes among which an invading army would have to suffer the demoralisation of guerilla attacks. Supposing the French took San Sebastian, they might be expected to have what James would call a "hot time" before they reached Vitoria. A Spanish army, I imagine, would concentrate there with an open main line of railway behind it for retreat or the hurrying up of reserves, according to the fortunes of war.

Vitoria is remarkable, then, as the scene of two famous victories—that of the Black Prince in 1367, and that of Wellington in 1818—and as holding an important military position, a key to Spain, rather than for its own intrinsic character. And just as after having mentioned the history and the important position of a person who is rather wanting in what we call "temperament," one would go on to speak of his estimable qualities, so one finds oneself describing Vitoria as clean, tidy, and well-regulated, with wide streets and pleasant squares. It is also, as James observed, a very "glassy" town. The impression given is that the inhabitants of Vitoria are too well-disciplined to need reminding of the proverb about people who live in glass houses, and that they have nothing to conceal; but also that Vitoria must be a very cold place in winter.

Vitoria is divided into a Lower or New and an

THE CANTON DE SOLEDAD; VITORIA

Upper or Old Town. The Gothic church of San Miguel stands midway between the two. The Old Town, or Villa Suso, is more interesting than the New, but still has the look of being periodically inspected by some authority for the preservation of ancient monuments. You do not feel that the Canton de Soledad, like the old streets of say Toledo, has persisted because the life that goes on about it is practically unaltered from the Middle Ages; you feel that it has been spared. The suggestion of interference, however benevolent, robs the Villa Suso of what is, I think, the peculiar charm of Spain; the feeling that it has escaped "improvement" not by favour of a sentimental regard for the past, but by sheer vitality of tradition. For this reason, by the way, Wörmann's description of Toledo as "a gigantic open-air museum" seems to me singularly unfortunate. A museum implies something preserved against the natural effects of time, and no place could be freer than Toledo from the look of being cared for; it is nonchalant as the hills.

But in making this distinction between the Old Town of Vitoria and the more characteristic cities of Spain, I do not mean that the former is uninteresting. Granting that it looks preserved, it was well worth preserving, and in the narrow streets and stairways above San Miguel there are many "bits" to delight the artist. From this eminence the angular belfries of the buildings below, with their delicate finials of wrought

iron, have a singularly beautiful effect against the sky.

The cathedral of Santa Maria stands at the highest point of the Villa Suso. It was built in the twelfth century, but has suffered badly from restoration. There are some fine but mutilated carvings in the great porch under the modern tower, and the pillars and vaulting of the nave are in a severe Gothic, which recalls the best examples of our Early English, though, with childish folly, the plinths of the pillars have been painted to imitate marble. As is usual, however, in Spanish churches, amongst the heartbreaking tomfoolery of successive restorers there are beautiful things in Santa Maria. For example, in a small chapel where, for a wonder, the altar was gracefully decorated with white lilies, we found a sanctuary lamp of copper, whether ancient or modern I don't know, that was in every way admirable. In this chapel there are some good though damaged sculptured tombs, and in calling our attention to them the sacristan gave us an illustration of the pleasure the Spaniard takes in some quite trivial detail or accidental effect. With a great air of mystery he drew a curtain over the window and, producing an end of candle, lit and held it behind the features of the recumbent figures, which are carved in alabaster, to show that they were translucent. It would be unfair to generalise from one ignorant sacristan, but he seemed to reproduce in a small way the Spanish—and perhaps the Southern

SANTA MARIA; VITORIA

—regard for works of art. There is in it a sincere and intense appreciation of colour and surface and texture and richness of material, with an almost entire absence of the sense of form and proportion. Generally speaking, the Spanish church or cathedral, however beautiful it may be in balance and design, is regarded by the natives merely as a shell containing treasures. Of the treasures themselves they have often the most discriminating appreciation. When, for example, our sacristan showed us the vestments, he changed from a perfunctory channel of stale information to an enthusiastic and critical connoisseur. He handled the stuffs as if he loved them, with a keen interest in workmanship, comparing patterns, and suggesting periods not from hearsay but using his own judgment, and calling our attention to those he liked best. Over and over again we found this to be the case; that in order to reach the live man, with tastes of his own, under the bored official, we had to wait for the vestments.

Quite in keeping with the spick-and-span regularity of the streets of Vitoria, the social atmosphere seems to be a combination of those of the garrison and the cathedral town. One would expect to find good schools for young ladies there —and indeed there is an academy of music. As we passed down the Calle de Santa Maria, somebody behind the white-curtained windows of the house at the corner was brilliantly playing the Sixth Polonaise of Chopin.

Vitoria made us feel rather disreputable, and we decided to go on to Burgos at midday. We bought some bread and fruit and a bottle of wine, and made our luncheon in the waiting-room of the station. Here we began to see a difference in the types of people. The Basque features were less in evidence, the *mantilla* was more frequent, and we saw one or two men wearing the broad-brimmed sombrero, and the brightly-coloured blanket slung over the shoulders, which are made familiar by pictures of Spain. We noticed that the ends of the blanket are sometimes turned over to form large and convenient pockets in which the owner can carry his personal belongings, so that he has cloak, night-covering, and knapsack in one.

The Concha of Álava was evidently once the bed of a lake. It is now level cornland, surrounded by distant mountains and intersected by a road, with tall poplars, and a small river, the Zadorra, which may be supposed to have drained off the waters of the prehistoric lake into the Ebro. Even to-day the river, with its low banks of terraced mud, resembles the deep-water channel of a tidal basin when the tide is out. The railway crosses the famous battlefield, about five miles west of the town, and the two villages of Ariñez and Gomecha, where the French made their final stand, can be seen on the road to the south of the line. Beyond Nanclares the encircling hills close in to form the narrow pass of Puebla de Arganzon, through which Wellington delivered his opening attack

on that rainy morning of June 21. Everything looked peaceful enough under the brilliant sun on the morning of our journey. Against the sea of corn, which may be considered to have taken the place of the waters of the ancient lake, the poplars told with an astonishing value of colour. They looked like inlaid enamel. It is perhaps only in these Southern lands, where it is no longer the general background, that green gets a chance to prove how beautiful it is. The little walled towns of crumbling red stone emerged like islands, and the far hills were faintly purple in the heat haze which hung quivering over the land.

We had an hour to wait at Miranda de Ebro, the junction between the main line and the railways to Bilbao and Zaragoza. The word "Miranda" may without violence be translated to mean "looking round," and indeed the place is admirably suited for that purpose. The station was crowded with all sorts and conditions of people, the most prominent among them being about twenty Civil Guards, who apparently were changing quarters. These men are the pick of the Spanish army, and in organisation and duties they resemble the Irish Constabulary. They are said to be absolutely unbribable, they are forbidden under any circumstances to accept a reward, and, as James acutely observed, they are the only uniformed men in Spain who look as if they got their wages regularly. "They look, too," he added, "as if they saw that they got them." The

Civil Guards wear a dark blue uniform with red piping, a curious three-cornered glazed hat turned up at the back, just where one would suppose shade to be needed, and yellow belts and rifle-slings; a combination of colour which significantly reminds one of hornets. But in spite of their menacing appearance they are quiet and courteous in their manners, though uncompromising in the execution of their duties. They are said to have a grimly short way with persistently troublesome characters. Having arrested a criminal, they take him for a walk in the mountains, and, arrived at a lonely spot, invite him to go on ahead. The sequel is a formal report to the authorities, "Prisoner shot while attempting to escape." The relief of Bilbao by ten thousand Civil Guards during the last Carlist war was one of the few occasions when they have been used as a purely military force.

Rural policemen couldn't have looked milder than the group of Civil Guards we saw on the platform of Miranda. They were surrounded by bundles and pots and pans, and several of them carried bird-cages, and large bunches of flowers. I suppose it is because these men are picked for their superior intelligence and physique that they looked as if they belonged to a different race from the people about them.

There is something peculiarly friendly about a Spanish railway station. Owing to the long waits and bad connections of the third-class trains, the low platforms are always crowded with picnicking

people, giving the impression that the station is intended for social gatherings rather than as a place of departure and arrival. Our train divided into two halves, with a gap in the middle, apparently for no reason but to allow people to cross the line freely. They took full advantage of this convenience, sitting down on the platform or the permanent way indifferently. The refreshment-room was full, and, as at an English station, there were the little groups of people excited over the possibility of losing the train, which stood in two halves, and without an engine, before their eyes. There were also the usual people with a fatal passion for the wrong train.

There were, for example, a roving band of laughing and irresponsible young women, including one with magnificent Venetian red hair, and the dazzling complexion that goes with it. With their gay frocks, flower-bedecked heads, fans, and white shoes, they looked as if they had just come out of a ball-room to take the air, and they moved as if the measure of the last waltz were tingling in their pulses. Hanging upon each other, and led by the inflammatory head like a torch of revolution, they paced up and down the platform with flirting fans, and challenging glances to right and left, fluttering round the Civil Guards like foam round rocks, tossing their chins, and flinging back some chaffing retort to any young man who was bold enough to address them. I lost sight of them for a time, and the platform was perceptibly duller

and colder, but presently, as I was passing down the train to look for the compartment where I had left James half asleep, the girls broke from it like sudden Spring, and came clambering down the high footboard, with laughter and little cries of mock terror. They were followed by James, beaming affably and swelling with importance. "I say," he cried, "they want to go to Bilbao, and I told them this wasn't the right train." The poor fellow was evidently torn between pride at being able to put them right, and pain at losing their exhilarating company. At this moment a bell rang furiously, and the bevy of damsels scampered away, and presumably caught their train, for we saw them no more.

Except for the purpose of "looking round," Miranda does not seem to be remarkable, though there is said to be an interesting church on the left bank of the Ebro. We crossed the muddy river, which it was difficult to believe was bound for the Mediterranean, and presently were ascending through the rocky and precipitous Pass of Pancorbo, which forms, as it were, a natural stairway, with two landings, to the wide, mountain-ringed plain of Old Castile. In the narrow flight between the two landings, road, rail, and the river Oroncillo, an affluent of the Ebro, come together with magnificent effect. Far below on the white, poplar-fringed road, which apparently emerges from a tunnel under the railway, we saw the solitary figure of a priest painfully making his way

through the dust and heat in the direction of Miranda.

The dusty-red village of Pancorbo, overlooked by two ruined castles, stands at the mouth of the Pass. The little railway station is pleasantly shaded with trees, and here we heard for the first time, as if to warn us of the character of the country we were entering upon, that piercing, long-drawn cry of the water-sellers, "*A-gua fresca!*" which by night and day haunts the traveller throughout the parched interior of Spain.

The true character of this country, as of its people, is not to be appreciated in the flat hours of a midsummer afternoon. At this time of day the spirit of the land, the *genius loci*, seems to be withdrawn into the far, faint hills, as the soul of a people shrinks under the heat and glare of noon, leaving only an arid monotony of surface, a tired body of earth, as it were. I have before me a map of Spain, buff-tinted, with a fine grey shading of *sierras*. It not unfairly represents the actual appearance of Castile in full daylight. It is emphatically a landscape depending upon moods and conditions; it needs the collaboration of the sky and the atmosphere; at evening, or under the moon, or most of all at early dawn, it yields, like a strong nature at the moment of surrender, a charm so poignant that one remembers only with a faint feeling of remorse, as at acquiescence in a lower standard of beauty, one's delight in the obvious picturesqueness of the Basque provinces.

Although we entered Castile at the wrong time of day, we were both warned against hasty impressions by a similar experience in a smaller way, which we had seen repeated over and over again in people on their first coming from Devon into Cornwall. Almost invariably the latter county—or at least its interior—disappoints and frequently repels them. They sigh for the trees and the rich undergrowth, the melodramatic water-leaps and beetling banks of the Dart and the Torridge; the ready-made *mise-en-scène*, in fact, of a dozen full-blooded romances of the primitive passions. They cannot all at once respond to the more subtle appeal of treeless downs, bare granite and sullen hills, to what at first affects them as the mere anatomy of a landscape. But sooner or later, if they have any imagination at all, they succumb, and I have heard it said again and again by visitors to Cornwall, that on their return to Devon it struck them as a little vulgar. I feel that I am quoting Cornwall too often in these notes, but in making comparisons it is natural to turn to the familiar, and, as a matter of bare fact, the difference between Vizcaya and Castile reproduces on a grander scale the difference between the two English counties I have named. Indeed, substitute corn for sea, and the distant *sierras* as we saw them from the train bore a remarkable resemblance to the long line of coast, visible as I write, from St. Ives Bay to Trevose Head.

Admitting that full daylight is not the happiest

condition for a first impression of Castile, there is to the imagination a certain dignity in the very absence of the more obvious elements of beauty. It is as if the land, with a noble renunciation, were content to be the mere surface, the waiting vessel, for that finer beauty which falls from the sky. Is it fantastic to say that this recalls the new and wiser attitude of landscape painters to nature, which began, I suppose, with Turner? I mean the abandonment of picturesque "views," the recognition that light itself is the protagonist, and that the objects upon which it falls are merely circumstances in the making of a picture; that beauty is finally a matter of moods and conditions, that wherever there are broad surfaces of earth, if only the sands of the desert, or sea, or snow, the soul of beauty may descend and make her dwelling. Whether or not the results of this new attitude are better than those which proceeded from the conceptions of scenes and objects as intrinsically beautiful, it certainly corresponds in a curious way with the belief, so often lost and found, and only now returning with renewed conviction, and the support of science, that the invisible is the reality and the material universe only its accidents.

There is something profoundly significant to the imagination, too, in the stern reduction of the actual crops of Castile to the bare essentials of human food. From this bleak table-land two thousand feet above the sea, these "*tierras de pau*

llevar," man with infinite labour is able to win the eternal symbols of life, bread and a little wine.

The train crawled over the interminable sea of corn at a speed of fifteen miles an hour. The passengers lined the corridor and hung out of the windows for air, and at intervals the guard climbed along the footboard—perilously near to the telegraph poles, each marked with the distance in *kilometros* from the capital, as if mere distance were the only definite thing for the mind to grasp in this featureless monotony of pale corn and tawny distant hills. Whenever the guard entered our compartment he never omitted to greet us with "*Buenas tardes.*" Two or three times during the journey we stopped at sun-baked villages of red stone where women and boys, with baskets of fruit or cool jars of wine and water, waited on the platform of the station which was lined with a welcome row of poplars. At Santa Olalla the level plain was broken by hills, and for a time we clattered through tunnels. Then again the monotonous expanse of corn, until at five o'clock we saw the spires of Burgos Cathedral rising in the distance on the right-hand side.

The city of Burgos lies in an oasis of poplar trees, overlooked by a barren hill with ruined fortifications, on the Arlanzon, which finally flows into the Duero. The splendid avenues lining the river trail off into dusty roads at either end, so that the city resembles a beautiful woman, proud,

ARCO DE SANTA MARIA; BURGOS

luxurious, and indolent, with magnificent jewels and draggled skirts. The climate of Burgos is said to be the worst in Spain, and gives rise to the popular saying, "*Nueve meses de invierno, tres de infierno*" ("Nine months of Winter, three of Hell"). The greater part of the city lies on the right or north bank of the river, furthest from the railway, and in crossing the shady Paseo from the station to the bridge of Santa Maria we were assailed at intervals by five beggars, the first we had encountered since coming to the country. The river at this time of year fills only a third of its bed, so that, as we stood on the five-arched bridge, I found myself wondering at its length and solidity. But we were told that after heavy rains the thread of water becomes a roaring flood, and this wide range of moods is well in keeping with the character of the city, which reminds one of a passionate nature for the moment brooding with languid pulses. Immediately fronting the bridge is the Arco de Santa Maria, a castellated and loop-holed gateway of yellow stone, with statues in niches, which is the main entrance to the city. The towers and lantern of the cathedral are visible above it.

Our first care, however, was to get rid of our burdens, and, pursued by beggars, we followed the pleasant Paseo del Espolon to the hotel we had been recommended. Here we received the impression that we were not going to be treated fairly, an impression which after events persuaded

me was due chiefly to a confusion of tongues. The proprietor, or manager, who seemed to be suffering from chronic alcoholism, happened to be a Frenchman with a rather morose manner, and though he spoke Spanish like a native, he insisted that his own language would be easier for us to understand. The result was a curious illustration of the way one language drives out another in the case of a person imperfectly acquainted with both. I knew considerably less Spanish than French, but having painfully practised the former for the last fortnight or so, I found it next to impossible to speak the latter intelligibly, and the result was a misunderstanding of terms. We decided, therefore, only to take a room for the night at the hotel and to dine and make arrangements for the morrow elsewhere.

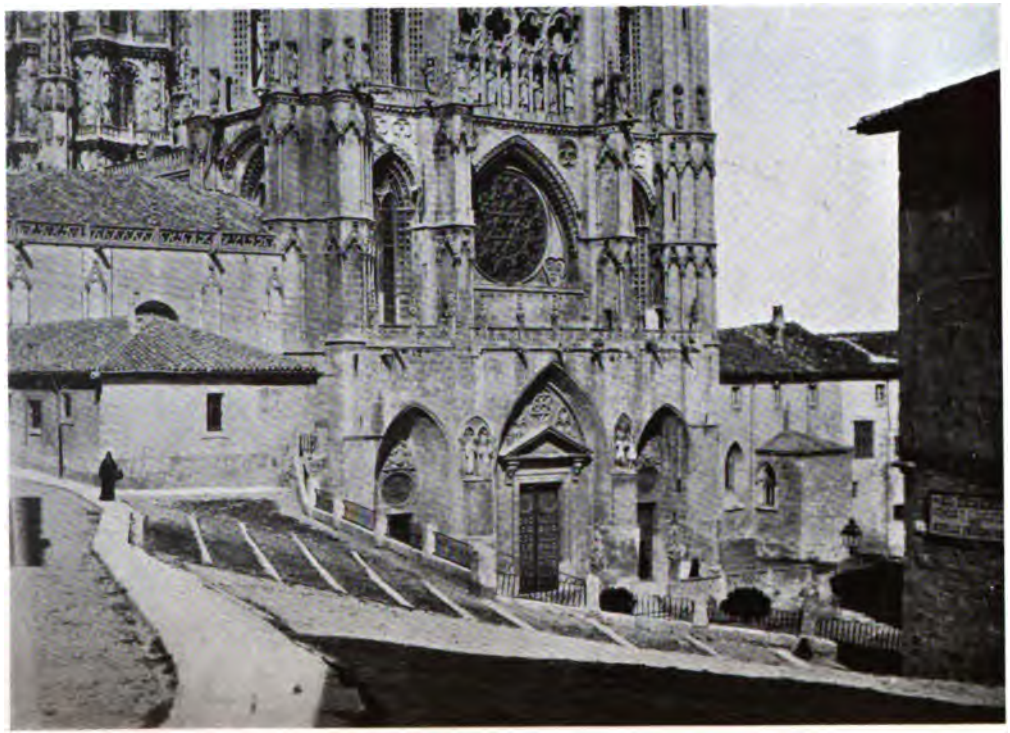
The Cathedral of Burgos overpowers the imagination by its exuberant vitality. One approaches it with a dozen reservations, with a dozen criticisms on the tongue, and is left speechless. As a whole it carries off triumphantly the defects, debasements, and puerilities of its parts as an overwhelming personality absolves defects of character and manner which would be fatal to an ordinary man or woman. You are so thrilled and exalted by the effect of the cathedral that you cannot fairly judge, or even see the cathedral itself. Built of a limestone that is not quite marble, it emerges from the flank of the hill like an outcrop of some crystalline substance, quivering with life,

that has not yet hardened into immobility; and this illusion of growth, that it is still in process of becoming, prevents the eye from dwelling upon the forms and outlines, often trivial and meaningless, into which it is already arrested. In cold blood and away from the cathedral one says that it is a jumble of styles, that it is over-florid, and that its great lantern is mere confectionery, but in the excitement of its presence one forgets these objections. For it is the excitement and exaltation of the religious emotion that Burgos Cathedral embodies rather than its peace and humility; it is a *Te Deum* in stone, and not by any means a *Nunc Dimittis*. It depends, so to speak, upon pace and gusto; a momentary flagging in the imagination of its builders would have resulted in a disastrous vulgarity. It is only not vulgar because it is too alive.

More than any building I saw in Spain the Cathedral of Burgos seems to me to reflect and embody the Spanish character. It recalls all the epithets one has ever heard applied to Spain; the sound and the colour and the magnificence which are associated with her intrusion into the history of the world. There is in the cathedral more than a flavour of that brutality, the lees of the Latin character, which seems to have settled in this westernmost division of the Latin race as the sonority of the Latin tongue has passed into the Spanish language. Whether from geographical position Spain seems to have missed some refining influence

—possibly Greek—which the other inheritors of the same ancestry have enjoyed, and she resembles Italy chiefly in those qualities which one thinks of as peculiarly Roman. It would be easy, I suppose, to push the distinction too far; but the persistence of the ancestral character with its virtues and defects is strikingly illustrated in Spanish art as compared with Italian by an absence, and in Spanish life by a survival. The striking difference between Spanish and Italian art is the entire absence from the former of the peculiar idealism which found its most remarkable but not unique expression in Botticelli; and in Spanish life the blood-lust of the Roman arena survives in the national institution of the bull-fight. The absence and the survival are probably due to the same reason—the lack of some contact with another race, inspiring in the one case and inhibitory in the other. In comparison with Italy the art and the life of Spain suffer a loss which—if the speculation is not a vain one—the art and the life of England might have been supposed to suffer if they had escaped the influence of that vague thing we call the Celtic element. One strange influence out of all the nations of Europe Spain did suffer, but of that we had as yet seen no traces.

It is then by vigour and exuberance rather than by subtlety and reserve that Burgos Cathedral appeals to the imagination. And for this reason it is able to bear a richness, a rankness of ornament which would be intolerable in a building of less



WEST FRONT OF CATHEDRAL; BURGOS

vitality, of colder temperament—as the Spaniard can use a floridity of manner which would be offensive in an Englishman. Something the cathedral owes to its position; you cannot weigh and consider it as a whole in a gradual approach; you come upon it suddenly from among houses which crowd upon it as if in a passion of adoration. The result is that you are within the magnetic circle of its influence, and your emotions are played upon before you have time to use your judgment.

We entered the cathedral by one of the doors in the western façade. A pale sacristan, one of those ageless, sexless little creatures that grow up in the shadow of ancient buildings, came forward, and dipping his fingers into the stoup touched ours with an appealing timidity which suggested unfortunate and humiliating experiences of our countrymen. I shall not easily forget his shy smile of relief. He spoke enough English for his office, having learned the language, he said, entirely from visitors to the cathedral. It is a little difficult to realise, by the way, that this extravagant rhapsody in stone, so Southern in its effect, was founded by an Englishman, Bishop Maurice, early in the thirteenth century. It is true that the sober Gothic of that period can still be traced in the transepts and in the main piers and arches of the nave; but it has been everywhere seized upon by the restless fancy of later workers. The general impression of the interior is that of a confused richness in a light but little tempered from that of the outer world. The

choir and the *capilla mayor* or chancel are connected by bronze screens to form a church within a church, filling the nave and preventing a clear appreciation of its size and proportions. One hears—without taking in the sense of it—that the nave is three hundred feet long. Everywhere the attempt to come to close grips with the building as unity is defeated by some excited and exciting piece of decoration, as if the intention were to distract the senses from anything approaching to a calm judgment. Not only vision is affected; indeed, my visual memory of the interior of Burgos Cathedral is always accompanied by a confused sound of music, though no music was going on at the time of our first visit. Hearing and vision are so curiously mingled in the retrospect that it is like standing under a belfry and trying to disentangle the true note of the bells from a clamour of harmonics.

Following our guide, we lost not only the sense of size and proportion but that of direction as well, and wandered as if in a forest. We visited chapel after chapel, each containing something of beauty and something in a taste that only the general bewilderment of our senses prevented from seeming deplorable. Certain things emerge from the jumble of impressions with welcome clearness: the exquisite *retablo* of dulled red and gold in the Chapel of St. Ana, a Flemish triptych and the magnificent tombs of the founder and his wife in the Chapel of the Constable; the Golden Staircase,

which ascends in two double flights to the door opening on the hillside at the end of the north transept, the sculptured scenes from the Passion behind the chancel—not really good, but somehow absolved by the general magnificence; the metal-sheathed figure of Bishop Maurice in the choir; and over all the amazing octagonal lantern, filled with light and feverish ornament, so hopelessly wrong by any standard save that of a bride-cake, and yet so triumphantly successful as the crown and summing up of the whole agitating interior.

"You cannot be in the procession and look out of the window," and in Burgos Cathedral you are emphatically in the procession, carried away by its life and movement, as if you saw it growing under the hands of the builders. You are thus left with a sense of infinite possibilities, of unexplored wealth, actual or in process of becoming; you never, or at least not after a dozen visits, stand still and say, "There it is, the whole thing." If I returned to Burgos I should be surprised to find it the same; I should expect to find that the tracery in the Chapel of the Constable had gone on blossoming and branching in my absence.

The sympathetic and self-effacing little sacristan did his best to keep some order in our bewildered impressions with a word or a gesture at the right moment, as a clever guide would help dizzy climbers over a difficult place by calling their attention to the quiet loveliness of a flower. He murmured over the exquisite carving of the choir

stalls, and caressed the thick, brown, illuminated pages of the great books of Offices, glancing at us with his pale, narrow smile as if to make sure that we had sufficiently rested our eyes and cleared our brains for the next impression. I almost expected him to feel my pulse. When he took us out into the grave early fourteenth-century cloisters it was like a plunge into cool water after feverish dreams, and we found ourselves gazing up at the Coffer of the Cid on the wall of the ante-room to the chapter-house with exaggerated interest, as if we had at last come upon something which we could grasp in its entirety. This great iron-clamped coffer of wood and leather is connected with a story which recalls the methods of modern finance. Being in want of money, the hero of Castile filled the trunk with sand and pledged it to the Jews as gold for a loan of six hundred marks, which he afterwards honestly repaid.

We found an hotel at which to dine in a narrow street not far from the cathedral. As we hesitated before a dirty doorway, wondering if it was the right entrance, a dwarf darted out as if he had been a waiting spider and led us up a dark staircase into a gloomy parlour, where the most prominent object on the round table was a copy of *London Opinion*. Here we were joined by the stout, smiling proprietress, who engaged us in friendly conversation. Our intention in dining away from the hotel where we had taken a room was to try to find lodgings for

the morrow at more reasonable terms, but we were no match for the lady in finesse. Her first question was, "Where are you stopping to-night, and what do they charge you?" We "hedged," and she then proposed a sum so extravagant for her own hospitality that we hastily assured her that we had merely compared notes out of a desire for general information. We had an amusing experience at the dinner-table. After we had taken our places a young man, whose appearance was so unexpectedly English that I'm afraid we both stared at him rather rudely, entered the *comedor*. He gave us the usual native greeting and sat down immediately opposite. We waited for him to address us in our own language, but nothing followed. There was no particular reason, of course, why compatriots meeting in a strange land should enter into conversation, but under the circumstances the silence seemed unnatural. It would have been easier to speak than not to speak. The stranger, who looked something between a priest in mufti and the more solemn kind of literary man, had a long, shorn face with unsmiling lips but a humorous twinkle in his eyes that rather attracted us, and both James and I were in the mood for talking to him; but as from his manner to the servants he was evidently an older guest than ourselves, we felt that he ought to make the first advance. As he didn't we were determined that we shouldn't, and there began a sort of duel of reserve which

presently became amusing for the sake of seeing who could keep it up longest. The stranger kept it up so successfully that I began to have doubts of his being an Englishman, but James, who is an authority on such matters, declared that nobody but an Englishman would wear a little gold cross on his watch-chain in a Catholic country. At last some roast beef was handed round the table, and I think we all three felt that with the advent of our national dish the critical moment had come. There was a little pause, and then, without speaking but with a slight intensification of his twinkle, the stranger —passed the mustard! As a riposte we thanked him—in Spanish—and so the duel ended in a "draw." Thus we parted from the only Englishman we met in Spain, except by appointment, without the interchange of a single word beyond "*Gracias.*" It was all very absurd, but we had to respect so subtle a humorist.

We took our coffee at a little table outside the Café Suizo, which overlooks the beautiful promenade of the Espolon, where a band was playing. It was a fine, warm night, and all Burgos was taking the air, drinking coffee or vermouth at the tables, or wandering up and down in orderly endless chains—two in the roadway and one on each pavement. Everybody seemed happy and contented to take their pleasure in this simple way; a cup of coffee, some good music, and a walk under the trees.

There were a great many soldiers, cavalrymen in handsome uniforms of light blue and silver, and infantrymen with trousers of a sumptuous red between crimson and scarlet, and most of the women wore white dresses. Groups of three or four people would fall out of the procession and settle at the tables, or join in again without creating any confusion. We made friends with a sharp little girl who was crying the *Diario del Norte* in piercing tones. We didn't want a paper, but she passionately refused to accept the coin we offered except in exchange. On the first page there was a programme of the music the band was playing that evening, and a melody sounding familiar, I looked out the number displayed on the band-stand. It was "A Wee Bit Heather."

Some sort of fair was going on in the avenue which runs westward along the river from the Puente de Santa Maria. The long line of lighted booths contained just the things one sees displayed on similar occasions in England; the peculiarly unwholesome-looking sweets and cakes that are known as "fairings," cheap cutlery and jewellery, toys, hair-combs and "slides" of imitation tortoise-shell and amber, and flimsy finery. The notices, too, were like our own: "Every article on this stall at three *reales*." "No article will be changed," and so on. The most popular toy seemed to be a large football with parti-coloured gores.

We spent several hours strolling about the Espolon or along the avenue which trailed out into the darkness. The temperature was of a most delicious mildness; it was almost the only night I remember when one could have slept out of doors without the slightest feeling of braving the elements, which is perhaps the commonest reason for doing so in our own country. In the darkness we missed the exact position of our hotel, and we asked for it of three soldiers returning to barracks. They accompanied us to the door, standing bare-headed with heels together to bid us a formal "*Buenas noches.*"

Five minutes' conversation with an intelligent waiter who didn't speak French cleared up our misunderstanding with his master, and we found that the terms of our accommodation were not unreasonable. As we went to bed a late newcomer was taken into the bedroom next to ours, and we heard him in anxious conversation with the waiter and trying the communicating doors and the window, which, like our own, opened on the leads of a lower storey. It was rather amusing to hear the waiter assuring the timid gentleman that he had nothing to fear from his neighbours.

PUERTA DEL SARMENTAL; BURGOS CATHEDRAL

CHAPTER XI

THE CLIMATE OF BURGOS—THE CANONS' MASS—SAN JOSÉ—SAN ESTÉBAN—THE CASTILLO—THE SPANISH "V" AND "B"—THE CONVENT OF LAS HUELGAS—A SIESTA—BEGGARS—DUST—THE WHITE WORLD OF LA CARTUJA DE MIRAFLORES—"FROM MAPLE'S"—A COLD EVENING AT BURGOS

WE were awakened by the bells of the cathedral and took our morning coffee among faded yellow roses in the sunny glazed balcony of the hotel. It was like sitting in a bird-cage. Assuming that July is one of the three months of *infierno*, the climate of Burgos is complicated in a manner that is truly Dantesque by a mixture of hell and winter on the same day. Directly we emerged from the hotel we were cut to the bone by a bitter wind that swept the Espolon, raising clouds of dust, as if in mockery of the brilliant sunshine. All the people we met were muffled up to the eyes, and looked miserable and short-tempered.

We entered the cathedral by the Puerta de Sarmental in the south transept which, with its beautiful rose-window and open arcade of the thirteenth century, is perhaps the most entirely satisfactory portion of the whole building. Canons'

Mass was being celebrated at the high altar of the *capilla mayor*, and we took our places between the great bronze screens which connect the chancel with the choir. Only about twenty people, all of the poorer classes, were present. The position of this humble congregation between the altar and the main body of clergy and the choir, and the grandeur of the ceremonial, and this merely on a weekday, gave a profound impression of the splendid indifference of the Roman Church to the support of the laity. It was as if the whole resources of religion were being squandered with the careless generosity of nature. Instead of the congregation being the main body of which the richly-vested priests at the altar were merely the official representatives, it was absorbed, lost and forgotten among them. People might come to mass or they might stop away; but whether they came in a thousand or a dozen, or came not at all, the full and unmodified ritual of the occasion would be performed. The people knelt on the marble floor under the great lantern, keeping close to the bronze screen, so as to leave the central space unimpeded, and at a certain point in the service the deacon and sub-deacon, accompanied by the master of the ceremonies in a gorgeous purple gown, conducted the bishop to the altar from his throne at the end of the choir. The celebration, as if it were the central function of the cathedral, seemed to give it an organic unity which it had hitherto lacked, and

when above the sombre chanting of the priests a boy's voice rang out exultingly in a florid solo, one seemed for a moment to catch a glimpse of some co-ordinating principle in this confusion and conflict of styles and periods; to see that the restless imagery of the lantern was not really incompatible with the sober lines of the original building. And when we passed out of the choir to walk round the ambulatory, and to glance again into the chapels, the ring of lesser churches which surrounds the central shrine, they had fallen into a new relation; they formed a background which was rich but no longer disturbing. It was as if only in the function of the building one had guessed the key to its structure.

There is something quite in keeping with its character in the way Burgos Cathedral defeats any attempt to photograph it as a whole. It never, so to speak, gives itself away, so that the result can be studied coldly at leisure. As we stood upon a rubbish-heap to enable me to take a partial view from the north-east, a little boy came, and, as one grasping the situation, pointed excitedly up to a small window in a tumble-down-looking house on the hillside above. We understood him to say that it was possible to take a photograph of the whole of the cathedral from the window. He took us to the house, of which the interior bore some traces of former architectural beauty, and led us up a staircase, but as the window looked into the eye of the sun it

was useless for my purpose. The boy tried a door which opened off the landing, but it was locked, and just then a woman came up, scolded him, and intimated that there were interesting things to see in the neighbourhood.

The building we were in, apparently once a place of importance, had been cut up by floors and staircases without regard to its original structure, as if a number of poor families had been allowed to make what they could of a palace. Hidden away in the heart of it, the woman showed us a small bare chapel in charge of a pale boy sacristan, who told us that it was the Chapel of San José. He was evidently proud of his charge, which, with its one altar, groined roof, and boarded floor, was not without a certain charm of simplicity, and there was something rather pathetic in the idea of him growing up forgotten in the shadow of the great cathedral. I can find no mention of San José in the guide-books, and apparently few come there to worship.

We entered the Church of San Estéban, with its fine rose-window crushed out of the circular by the settlement of the wall above, over the western door. The church contains some interesting tombs, an elaborately carved pulpit, a late but not unbeautiful gallery, and a curious old painting of the Last Supper over the sacristy door. From the window of the sacristy there is a distant view of the Monastery of La Cartuja de Miraflores, on a hill to the south-east of the city.

The woman led us into some ruined cloisters of admirable fourteenth-century work, choked with rubbish, and passing through a door we found ourselves on the bare hillside below the Castillo. When we had paid the woman, we gave some coppers to the little boy who had shown us the window overlooking the cathedral, and he was immediately surrounded by some smaller companions, wrangling over the division of the spoil with loud cries of "*Para mi!*" ("For me!"), "*Para todos!*" ("For all!").

The reddish, dusty mound of the Castillo is covered with crumbling fortifications of Moorish work—the first we had seen in Spain. As we climbed to the summit, past a few men twisting ropes, it was hard to believe that this was once the seat of the Castilian kings, and that even so late as 1812 the French were able to hold it for a month, with final success, against the repeated attacks of Wellington, so that with the approach of reinforcements for the defenders, he was compelled to retreat upon Madrid. Here also the Cid was married to Ximena in 1074, and Edward I. of England to Eleanor of Castile in 1254. From the ruined walls of the Castillo, where a thin grass quivered in the cold wind, we had a wide view of the surrounding country. Immediately below us lay the city stretched out along the Arlanzon, as if exhausted by her passionate history. East and west long avenues of poplars, broadening to a park about Las Huelgas,

carried a refreshing note of green into the tawny, monotonous plain, surrounded by distant mountains.

Remembering the advice of our philological friend at Durango, we crossed the river to visit Las Huelgas, which lies about a mile and a quarter to the south-west of the city. We followed a fragrant avenue of tall planes and poplars beside the river. Sheep-washing was going on at the weir, and in the dry space of the river-bed we saw the characteristic figure of a shepherd, with a slouch hat and a coloured blanket about his shoulders, leaning on a tall staff in the midst of his flock. The river-bed, indeed, was full of incidents which marked the importance of water in this wind-parched and sun-baked land. A little below the weir oxen were being watered, picking their way among the pools with extraordinary deliberation; and in several places groups of women were washing clothes and singing monotonously over their work. Everywhere we were reminded of the Spain we had read about and seen in pictures. As we turned to recross the river by the Puente de Malatos to refresh ourselves at a little wine-shop, we were commended to God by a grave man, with an immensely broad hat, with the straight brim turned up at the edges like a tray, riding upon a gaily caparisoned mule.

The dark interior of the wine-shop was crowded with wild-looking men seated at a rude table over a steaming pot of beans and bacon. Their excited

conversation died away on our entrance, and we heard the word "*Franceses*" muttered by one and another. We turned round and said, "*No, Ingleses,*" and immediately the gloom flashed with teeth, friendly hands were waved, and the clatter of knives began again. The girl at the counter seemed hardly to understand my request for wine. She stared at me in a puzzled manner and then said, "*Oh, bino!*" This interchange of the Spanish *v* and *b*, often compromised by something between the two, impossible to reproduce phonetically, is curiously suggestive of Southern languor, as if the lips, heavy with heat, were unable to discriminate between the two sounds. The faltering articulation of the middle sound seems to have left visible traces of a wistful charm on the sensuous lips of the Spanish woman. This correspondence between sound and shape is, I think, not merely fanciful: you can see "laidy" on the lips of the London shopgirl, and in Lancashire there is a characteristic type of mouth associated with the production of the nearly French *eu* sound, as in "feut-ba'" for "foot-ball."

We drank two glasses of an excellent white wine resembling Sauterne, and recrossed the bridge to the Convent of Las Huelgas, with its little old-world village in odd proximity to a new military hospital. Male visitors are allowed only in some parts of the chapel, and the sacristan who met us at the gates had a certain confidential gravity as if he were conscious of privileges denied to the rest

of his sex. He tip-toed into the chapel and returned with a finger on his lip, explaining that a Chapter was in progress and that we must wait for a few minutes in the porch of the cloisters. Here there are some very beautiful thirteenth and fourteenth century tombs, one with a sculptured canopy, a fine rose-window, and other architectural details in a pure early Gothic. The whole building, indeed, is of a comparatively severe Northern character, in striking contrast to the rococo richness of Burgos Cathedral. The place has English associations in keeping with its appearance, for Edward I. was knighted here in 1254, and Eleanor, daughter of Henry II., who as the wife of Alfonso VIII. was responsible for the foundation of the convent, lies buried in the chapel.

The convent originally possessed an almost royal revenue and extraordinary privileges. The abbess, "*por la gracia de Dios*," came next to the Queen of Spain in dignity, with powers of life and death, and the nuns were of the nobility with the title of "*Señoras*" or "ladies," instead of "*sores*" or sisters. Their present number is twenty-eight and, if I understood the sacristan rightly, they are divided into two orders; those of noble birth belonging to St. Bernard and the others to St. Benedict.

There is not much to see in that part of the chapel of Las Huelgas which we were allowed to visit except some fine sixteenth-century tapestry and, hanging from the chancel roof, a copy of the

banner taken from the Moors at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. The original is kept in the nuns' choir. This relic of old strife well becomes a place which, in spite of the loss of revenue and privilege, still retains the atmosphere of the church militant, and something of the fine arrogance of a powerful religious order. There is about Las Huelgas, too, a feeling of the uncompromising severity of women's rule, and though the abbess no longer holds the powers of "*horca y cuchillo*," of the gallows and the knife, one would not be surprised to find inscribed upon the portal the line out of Tennyson's "Princess," "Let no man enter in on pain of death." The sacristan was very anxious that we should see the *señoras*, and we waited by the iron grating which divides the transepts from the nave until the hour of their office. They came in swiftly and silently, with an effect of dignity and aloofness which gave one the uncomfortable sensation of a Peeping Tom, and took their places in the richly-carved stalls of the choir, which is hung with gorgeous tapestries of red violet. One of the *señoras* began the office in a voice so strangely emptied, not only of sex but even of humanity, that we were glad to retreat from the chapel and find ourselves again in the homely atmosphere of the little village at its doors.

We crossed the Puente de Malatos once more and returned to Burgos by the pleasant Paseo de la Isla, which is laid out in a little park with stocks and roses in bloom. The shepherd still stood

motionless, leaning on his tall staff in the midst of his flock in the river bed. Apparently neither he nor they had moved a limb since we passed there an hour ago on the other side of the river.

We bought bread and fruit at a shop with live partridges in wicker cages hanging at the door, and went to a low-browed *cantina* to eat our lunch. The interior reminded me of a picture by Mr. Brangwyn. In one corner a gipsy-looking man lounged on a bench and drank wine from a curious long-spouted vessel which he held away from his tilted head, directing the needle-fine stream of liquor into his mouth with consummate skill. With difficulty I prevented James from disgracing himself by attempting the trick in public. Afterwards we dozed on the benches in the Espolon, where we had to choose between being frozen in the shade or roasted by the sun. Except for two or three men who, like ourselves, were taking their *siesta* in the open air, there was not a person visible. The whole city seemed silent and deserted, and when, after an hour, we rose to walk to La Cartuja, the figures of eighteen or twenty men lying full length on the hot pavement behind the cavalry barracks quite startled us; they looked so like the bodies of the dead.

We crossed the river by the bridge of San Pablo, which connects a little island with either bank, to the magnificent Paseo de la Quinta, planted with poplars, elms, and acacias. From here one has a good general view of the red and

white city stretched out beside the river, dominated by the cathedral with its background of bare, pale, sandy hill, topped by the crumbling walls of the Castillo. Unlike most English towns, Burgos degenerates from the centre outwards, and thus gives the impression that it is merely a setting for the cathedral; that the cathedral came first before there were any houses, as if people came out of the barren plain to wonder and worship long before they found courage to build their dwellings around it. There are no suburbs to Burgos; it leaves off in the dust, giving a strange effect of isolation. It is built in an oasis of the desert, though one feels that the city was there before the trees. But for the city there would be no trees; the avenues extend east and west along the river banks, carrying a thread of green into the country, as if they were reluctant to leave off.

About a mile from the city we left the grateful shade and the grass of the Quinta for a burning road that crossed the railway. From a woman on her knees beating clothes beside a runnel we asked the way to La Cartuja; she told us, laughing hysterically at our use of her language. Many wild flowers grew from the hot soil beside the footpath we followed between a cornfield and the broad-gauge railway line; there were scabious, cornflowers, rest-harrow, poppies, vetch, dog roses, and a species of hemlock. At a level crossing there was a little square house bearing a plate with the number 367—the distance in *kilometros* from

Madrid. A woman dozed on a kitchen chair in the doorway, with rolled flags in her lap, and two children lay asleep on the ground in dangerous proximity to the line. Here a priest told us to take the broad road to the right, and in a few minutes we came to an archway bearing the initials of "*Jesus Christus Redemptor Rex Regum.*" This was originally the entrance to Enrique III.'s deer-park of Miraflores, which his son, Juan II., gave to the Carthusian Order in 1442. Through the archway the road ascends to a group of buildings at the lower angle of the monastery grounds, once the farm, but now apparently disused. We took the road to the left, skirting the high boundary-wall and rising steeply. The hillside here is clothed with dwarf oak and elm trees, and there is a scanty vegetation. In a little dingle we saw a shepherd asleep wrapped in his blanket, with his flock around him. The circular shadow of an elm exactly covered man and sheep. The road was ankle-deep in dust, the heat of the sun overpowering, and twice during the short ascent we sat down, crushing ourselves against the wall to gain a hand's-breadth of shade. Each time we were accosted by a beggar, who appeared from nowhere, with the formula, "*Una limosnita por la gracia de Dios.*"

The Monastery of La Cartuja de Miraflores, founded by King Juan II., destroyed by fire and rebuilt, all in the fifteenth century, stands on a hill about two miles to the south-east of Burgos. It was the work of John of Cologne and his son

Simon, who also built the main towers of Burgos Cathedral. A wayside cross heralds the first vision of the monastery, which at the present day is inhabited by twenty monks.

At three o'clock on this blazing afternoon we found half-a-dozen beggars outside the portal, wrapped in their blankets, dozing in the sun. On the strength of our dusty and generally down-at-heel appearance they accepted us as brothers, and told us that there was no chance of hospitality till four o'clock. Speaking of dust, by the way, I'm inclined to doubt if a dark blue serge suit—though it has the advantages of being hard-wearing and inconspicuous and passable in most of the social emergencies which are likely to befall the stranger—is quite the best clothing for rough travelling in the interior of Spain, at any rate in summer. While we were in the Castiles we felt like millers; the dust was so fine that it sank into the material, and the application of a clothes-brush only served to bring it to the surface in white lines. If it had rained we should have been encased in a sort of dough.

The elm-shaded plateau in front of the portal is flanked on the right by tall iron gates giving on what is, I suppose, the present farm of the monastery. The gates were open, but an immense wolf-hound guarded the entrance. To pass the interval until four o'clock we followed the example of the beggars, though at a little distance, and lay down on the scrubby yellow grass by the

cypress-topped cemetery wall, where we were roasted by the sun on one side, and on the other chilled by the bitter wind which seems to be eternally blowing over the level cornlands of Old Castile. Before us lay an immense plain, extending apparently as far as Pancorbo, enclosed by flat-topped khaki-coloured hills, and intersected by the railway and a line of poplars, vividly green against their drab surroundings. We were as if hung up in space over the very plains of silence. Nothing of the monastery was visible to the outer world but the long church of pale stone with pinnacled buttresses, whereon snapdragons were growing as if in passionate protest against their austere birthplace.

On the stroke of four the beggars turned over and yawned, and one of them lazily beckoned us to the portal, whence came a stirring of bolts. He prepared to take his chance with us in a sportsmanlike manner, clutched with surprised gratitude the coppers we gave him, and before his companions could rouse themselves to frame an appeal, pushed open the door.

For a moment our eyes, accustomed to the drab and dusty world outside, were dazzled by the white loveliness of the scene. The little square garden of the cloistered court was filled with white roses, Madonna lilies, reflecting the light like molten silver, and tall white hollyhocks, gently moving. In the midst a little white statue of St. Bruno, in the habit of the order, with folded arms, looked down at the flowers. Miraflores—I wonder

ST. BRUNO AND THE LILIES; LA CARTUJA DE MIRAFLORES

if it is by chance, or in a pretty gratitude, that this figure of the founder of the Carthusians is made thus to perpetuate the original name of the royal park bestowed upon the order? Miraflores—"To look at the flowers."

A door on the right opened quickly, and a lean, white-robed, white-bearded monk half emerged, and with a passionate gesture, which we at first mistook to mean that we must not further disturb the lilied peace of St. Bruno, showed us a door on the other side of the court. He disappeared, and in a few moments admitted us to the western division of the church, which is open to worshippers from the outer world. His deeply sunken dark eyes—they seemed indeed the darkest thing in all this whiteness—burned with extraordinary intensity in his parchment face, and his movements were quick and abrupt. Only the touching patience with which he helped out our unfamiliarity with his language convinced us that he was not very angry. Little by little one recognised that the wildness of his manner came from zeal; it was the positive aspect of asceticism, as if the energy which most men fritter away in speech, and the idle business and pleasures of life, were in him concentrated in a white heat of devotion. Looking at him, one's idea of the cloister as a place where life lagged, where duties were invented to kill monotony, were readjusted. I understood the meaning of the phrase that such a one had "embraced" the religious life.

The church of La Cartuja is without aisles, and, as is usual in Carthusian convents, divided into three portions; the westernmost for the people, the middle for the lay monks, and that nearest the high altar for the priesthood. Bidding us follow him through the wooden screen bearing the words "*Felix Cœli Porta*," and flanked on one side by a Flemish and on the other by a Spanish altar-piece, the brother showed us the treasures of the small white building; the marvellous *retablo* of carved and gilded wood—gilded, he said, with the gold which Christopher Columbus brought from America—by Gil de Siloé, a triptych of the Crucifixion by one of the Flemish masters, from whom the Spanish painters learned so strangely little, and the elaborate and minutely realistic marble and alabaster monuments of Juan II. and his queen and of the Infante Alonso. These monuments, which are by Gil de Siloé, are said to be the best of their kind in Europe, but for all their exquisite foliation—as fine as frostwork—and cunning imitation of textures, one finds oneself admiring their ingenuity rather than loving their beauty. In the chapel of St. Bruno we saw the painted wooden statue of the saint of which Philip IV. said, "He does not speak, but only because he is a Carthusian monk."

Having shown us round the church, the brother flung—the word cannot be avoided—himself on his knees in one of the stalls, muttering feverishly, as if not a moment must be unoccupied. Presently

half-a-dozen other visitors entered the church; two commercial-looking men, who loudly estimated the value of every object they handled, accompanied by an over-dressed woman and a little boy carrying a hoop, a soldier and a peasant girl with a pocket-handkerchief covering her head. The behaviour of the last two was in pleasant contrast to that of the others. The brother asked us to wait in the ante-chapel while he took them round, and as I was extremely anxious to get a photograph of the little garden, we took advantage of the porch to change my films. A curious incident, and one that made me feel slightly uncomfortable, happened while I was taking the picture. I had released the shutter, and on looking up from the finder I met another pair of eyes, startled, and a little reproachful, gazing into mine. A brother, carrying a watering-pot, had noiselessly entered the garden while I was busy—if indeed he was not there all the time, for his white habit against the pale wall and among the flowers made him practically invisible but for his eyes. If he had stood a second earlier where I became aware of him he would have been included in the picture. I can only hope that he did not think I was snapshotting him.

When the brother had finished showing the church to the other visitors, he called the men of the party together, and we entered the monastery. What impressed us most was the childlike enthusiasm of our guide, as if he could not suffi-

ciently express his joy at being permitted to serve God in so beautiful a place. But there was not the least trace of anything morbid or sentimental in his manner, which, on the contrary, was intensely practical, with a brisk, unsmiling cheerfulness as if there were many and important things to do, while all the world outside the monastery walls was wasting its time. To James and myself, as to strangers in the land, he was particularly attentive, repeating his remarks very slowly, with vivid gestures and grasping our arms to enforce his meaning. "There is a Carthusian monastery in London," he told us, as if to make us feel at home.

With pathetic want of taste the white vault of the cloister had been painted with black stripes to imitate groining. Fixed to the wall at one point was a long tablet with names written in black and red, and little movable pegs, like the scoring-board of some intricate game, to show where and when each brother was occupied, and so save the necessity for speech. Below the tablet a slip of paper told us that a few days earlier one of the white company had finished his earthly novitiate. Through the barred windows in the outer wall of the cloisters we had glimpses of a vegetable garden and orchard, the trim and flourishing condition of which was in keeping with the energetic manner of our guide. He took us into the refectory, where the clean cloth of the long table was protected at the edge by a board and furnished at intervals with

small bottles of wine and some thick white crockery. Finally, with the infusion of a slightly more personal civility into his manner, very charming to see, he invited us into his own cell. It was very cold and bare, with an uncovered mattress under an alcove, a deal table, and some plain shelves fixed to the wall, and it had not even the comfort of privacy, for there was a peep-hole in the door; but the brother did the honours with a simple dignity which would have become the owner of a palace. As if he would insist upon every detail of his privileges he drew me to the small window and showed me a foot of blue sky, a tree-top, and a corner of the crocketed roof of the church. I fancied that his eyes were momentarily wistful as we turned from the window.

It was at this moment that one of the commercial-looking gentlemen justified our instinctive dislike of him, and proved that the bounder may exist even in Spain. Touching my arm, he pointed contemptuously to the poor table and the shelves, and said—I'll swear they were the only English words he knew—"From Maple's."

The difference between the atmosphere of La Cartuja and that of Las Huelgas struck me as too remarkable to be put down to personal feeling. Equally removed from the world in character, and more by position, La Cartuja is not, like Las Huelgas, removed from humanity. It seems to have attained its aloofness from the world by a fusion of the discordant elements of human nature,

as if by an increase of spiritual temperature. Even its appeal to the bodily senses is positive rather than negative. It is white and silent, but not merely from the absence of colour and sound. The silence and the whiteness of the place are both positive, as if it were silent by the harmony of all sounds and white by the balance of all colours. And the difference, so far as it can be judged by a passing observer, between the "*Señoras*" of Las Huelgas and the monks of La Cartuja, as people apart from the world, is the difference between a function suppressed and a function more happily fulfilled than is possible to people exposed to the disturbing accidents of social intercourse. I should hesitate to generalise from this, to say, for example, that apparently only men and not women can live the dedicated life in concert without violence to their natures, and indeed the difference in result may be due to a sum of small practical differences in the routine and occupations of the two orders, but it is certainly the case that while the final note of Las Huelgas is that of the uneasy arrogance which so often follows and supports renunciation, the last impression of La Cartuja is that of the serene humility which is fulfilment.

Until now I had thought of a monk as a man who had simplified life only by giving up its problems: when I shook hands with the brother of La Cartuja in the little fragrant garden of white flowers, watched by St. Bruno, which seemed to sum up the spirit of the place as the banner of Las

THE QUINTA; BURGOS

Navas sums up the spirit of Las Huelgas, I felt that I was parting from a man who had solved them. And because he had solved them I felt that, in spite of the barrier of language, we had met and talked intimately; that I had suffered one of those rare experiences in which for a moment the impertinent but insuperable obstacles to human intercourse had ceased to exist. I think I could have more easily told a personal trouble to the brother of La Cartuja than to any human being I have ever met.

When we returned to Burgos, officers were taking their evening ride under the immense poplars of the Quinta. We turned into a wine-shop where a violent quarrel was going on between two men and a woman in the living-room. Every moment we expected to see the flash of a knife, but nothing happened, and I suppose that among these excitable people a very slight difference of opinion gives rise to a great deal of language. The man who served us remained quite unmoved, though he apologised to us for the noise. The after-dinner promenade on the Espolon was in striking contrast to that of the night before. The cold wind which had been blowing all day was now almost unbearable. There were a fair number of people listening to the band, but they were closely muffled up, and their gaiety seemed forced and their tempers brittle. After a quick turn to try to keep warm, we were glad to seek the shelter of our hotel.

CHAPTER XII

A CITY OF CHURCHES—SANTA AGUEDA, SAN NICOLAS, SAN GIL—THE CHARACTER OF BURGOS—THE CID—THE CASA DE MIRANDA—THE RAILWAY STATION: "COSAS DE ESPAÑA"—CRUELTY TO ANIMALS—TIME-TABLES—THE PRIEST OF LOGROÑO AND HIS COMPANION—"LIFE" IN CORUÑA—THE BOROUGH ROAD—FIRST SIGHT OF OLIVE TREES—CASTILIAN EVENING—"AGUA FRESCA!"—CIVIL GUARDS—"MERENGUES"—THE NATIONAL VICE—VALLADOLID—OUR THOUGHTFUL COMPANION—EL ESCORIAL—MADRID

ON reflection, I see that nothing could better illustrate the ecclesiastical interest and importance of Burgos than the fact that, after a day and a half, except for our mistaken quest of a change of hotels, we had not so much as entered the city. Without any conscious intention of avoiding it, we had passed from the cathedral, as if underground, into the churches which are flung out along the base of the hill like a line of skirmishers, had emerged upon the Castillo, descended and walked westward to Las Huelgas, lounged upon the Espolon, and walked eastward to La Cartuja. If we had been forbidden the city we could not have more scrupulously walked round it. Even on the morning of our third day,

when we set out without any definite plan, we found ourselves drawn irresistibly into the cathedral through the noble Puerta del Sarmental. As we passed through the great bronze screens to hear mass, the little sacristan, who spoke English, greeted us with a sly, narrow smile, as if he were seeing for the thousandth time the inevitable submission of the stranger to the magic of the building. But except for a tantalising glimpse under the influence of the mass of some co-ordinating principle, we were no nearer to the secret of that magic. It was true that by this time we had grasped the general plan of the cathedral, could see the relation of the chapels to the central shrine, and could find our way without hesitation to points of special beauty, such as the *retablo* of Santa Ana, or the little early chapel next to that of the Constable, but this only increased the effect of conflict and disorganisation. Yet the emotional effect of Burgos Cathedral is somehow that of unity, and one is forced back to the conclusion suggested by the illusion of growth, of *becoming*, that the key to it is in the fourth dimension. Unless, as yesterday, the illuminating power of a boy's voice would have seemed to indicate, the successive builders with an incredible subtlety of art allowed for a solvent of the incompatible elements of beauty in sound. One striking character of religion belongs to Burgos Cathedral: it prevails upon the imagination, apart from judgment and against the will.

The more important churches of Burgos are all at the base of the hill, and practically outside the city. Santa Agueda, where Alfonso VI. was compelled by the Cid to purge himself by an oath, thrice repeated, from the charge of assassinating his brother, was closed for repairs to the roof, so we made our way northward to San Nicolas and San Gil. The confusion of my notes at this point seems to indicate that we had seen enough of churches and were beginning to suffer from a plethora of impressions. Certain things I remember, but I cannot say to which church they belonged. There were, for example, a quite satisfactory pulpit, decorated with a small pattern in low relief of gilded iron, some interesting tombs of marble inlet in black stone, early Flemish pictures, and a good copy of Da Vinci's Magdalene, and a very curious figure of the Virgin, Byzantine in character, and, unless my memory deceives me, with real hair. More clearly I remember a bored sacristan coming to life as he showed us vestments—copes, chasubles, and dalmatics of the fourteenth century, and still in use on high festivals, of dark violet, red and gold, and wonderful faded purple hues resembling those of the crocus.

Burgos lies roughly in the form of an inverted right-angled triangle, the line of churches forming the base, and the river front, including the Espolon, the hypotenuse. San Gil stands in the right angle, at the extreme north of the

city. From this point we descended into the still unexplored triangular mass of buildings, finding ourselves eventually in the large irregular Plaza Mayor, which communicates with the Espolon by an archway under the Town Hall or Casa Consistorial. The general impression we received was expressed by James when he said that beside the cathedral Burgos does not matter. Nothing apparently is made there, but it has an atmosphere of quiet prosperity not unlike that of an English cathedral town. What few traces of occupation we saw were all connected with pastoral or agricultural life, as if the city were mainly a market centre for the surrounding country. Wool was the article most in evidence. In the comparatively wide space of the Calle del Huerto del Rey we saw a resting cavalcade of laden mules which had apparently just come to town. The men and women sat on the pavement as if their part of the business was over. Most of the men wore olive-green corduroy trousers, with a fancy zig-zag stripe, and broad red sashes round their waists. The large market-house was overflowing with fruit and vegetables, and on the stalls outside were farming implements for sale; shearing-blades and reaping-hooks, and queer little wooden peaked shoes which the reapers wear on their left hands.

These hints of rural occupation give to Burgos a certain attractive homeliness not unlike that of a middle-aged person who has settled down to

country pursuits after a hot and romantic youth. The age of cities, like the age of people, does not depend upon the length of time they have been in existence—there are cities that look as if they had turned old in an hour—and in spite of her ancient history Burgos is middle-aged rather than old in character. She is not yet reminiscent, she is well preserved and too full of a sober cheerfulness to be called venerable; she has "warmed both hands before the fire of life," but she is by no means "ready to depart." Religion is now, as ever, of course, her principal interest, and for the rest, she carries on just enough business of a dignified sort to pass the time away and keep things going. It is as if, remembering her past, a sense of humour, rather than lack of energy, prevented her taking part in the "progressive" movement which at the present moment seems to be affecting most of the other cities of Spain. She has had enough of excitement, she only wants to cultivate her garden —that strange garden of corn and olives—and to grow old beautifully. Being so far from the sea, her wish is likely to be gratified.

The history of Burgos is the history of Old Castile. Once the seat of the Castilian kings, the city gave birth to the most famous flower of Spanish chivalry, the Cid. The site of the house where he was born, the Solar del Cid, can still be seen on the mound of the Castillo, where he was married to Ximena. By his own wish they were buried at the Convent of San Pedro de Cardeña, a

few miles beyond La Cartuja, and after strange wanderings their bones are preserved in a glass case, resembling that of a museum, in the little chapel of the Casa Consistorial of Burgos. We were taken to see these relics by an official who spat on the floor, and whose gorgeous uniform made us hesitate to offer the coins he nonchalantly accepted. Besides the bones of the Cid and Ximena, the Casa Consistorial contains a very beautiful Flemish painting of Santa Lucia, and a good modern picture of an incident in the life of the local hero.

On the flat and shady south bank of the river, Burgos gives herself a little more room, as if in the attempt to establish a residential quarter and a social life distinct from that of the cathedral. One can imagine that, with the removal of the court to Toledo, and finally to Madrid, a few of the more important families settled here, keeping up the old order and looking down a little upon the mushroom society of the new capitals. Two at least of their palaces remain. The most interesting is the Casa de Miranda, a dilapidated Renaissance building with a central *Pátio* surrounded by Corinthian columns. As if any attempt to set up a separate life from that of the cathedral, which is the *raison d'être* of Burgos, were bound to fail from want of vitality, it is here that Burgos looks really old. Decay, which is absent from the earlier buildings on the north side of the river, and from Las Huelgas and La Cartuja, is the

characteristic note of the Casa de Miranda. The ragged women and children who prowl about the ruined court and broken staircase to pounce upon the casual visitor, as they pounced upon us, only give point to the utter desolation of the place, which is oddly antique Roman in its effect. By a strange irony, the motto inscribed upon the coats of arms is the single word "*Paz.*" Again, it seems to me, one is reminded that the real vitality of Spain is a spiritual vitality. The peace of La Cartuja is the living peace of adjustment which a really vital thing will always make with whatever changes of environment, but the peace of the Casa de Miranda is the peace of death.

In anticipation of our long journey to Madrid —for we had reluctantly decided that it was impossible to visit both Toledo and Segovia in the time at our disposal—we spent a lazy day, lounging about the Espolon, wandering through the market, and returning again and again to the cathedral. When we said good-bye to the little sacristan who had so sympathetically guided us, he said in a tone of comfortable prediction rather than of inquiry:

"You will come here again."

Our train was timed to start at five o'clock. We found the station already crowded with poor people squatting on the platforms as if they had been camped out there for several hours. The impression was that they were not waiting for any particular train, but that they hoped rather against

hope that presently a train would come along which would be kind enough to take them to their destination. The reason for this did not appeal to us at the time, but later, when we were leaving Madrid, we suffered an experience which enabled us to understand why the more important stations on the Spanish main lines of railway are always crowded with poor people. It is one of the *cosas de España* which are apparently accepted as unalterable. Nothing, indeed, is more remarkable to a stranger than the fatalistic patience with which so ardent a people submit to official blundering and mismanagement.

While we were waiting a cattle train pulled up for a few minutes by the platform where we stood, and this gave us an illustration of a painful defect in the character of the Spanish people; their terrible indifference to the sufferings of animals. A young bullock had fallen down, with others, all apparently in desperate need of water, crowded upon it, and one of its hind legs protruded between the bars of the truck. Nothing was done to release it, but a porter seized its leg and roughly thrust it back, anyhow, out of the way. He did this, not cruelly, but as if he were handling an inanimate object, which made the action all the more significant of a fundamental insensibility. If there was not time to unload the truck it would have been kinder to shoot the bullock, and this might easily have been done, as there were any number of armed officials about the station.

tenderness. This, apparently, did not proceed from abstract reverence for the priesthood; from his appearance and conversation the man—he was a stiff-built fellow of about thirty—was a thorough though genial blackguard. In England he would have passed for a "bookie" of the coarser type. He settled the priest in his corner, putting a valise under his head, finding his water-bottle and attending to his comfort in a dozen little thoughtful ways. The priest submitted to these ministrations with the grateful helplessness of a tired child.

Resuming his seat with an indulgent, almost contemptuous jerk of his head in the direction of the object of his kindness, as if he wouldn't have us suppose that he had any sympathy with that sort of person, the big man began to talk to us in a mixture of Spanish and very bad English. His companion, he said, was "quite high up," the "chief priest," in fact, of Logroño, on his way to spend a holiday with friends at Medina. He himself was going to Coruña, where he meant to have a good time, and he went on to express a startlingly depraved point of view in some of the foulest language I have ever heard. There were many Englishmen in Coruña, said the genial blackguard, and when, as with an unflattering conception of the tastes and habits of travelling Englishmen, he impressively described to us the extraordinary cheapness of worldly pleasures in that city, I glanced involuntarily at the priest, who lay with his eyes closed, he said, with a

contemptuous wave of his hand, "It's all right; he not know English." Our friend had been to England; what he did there Heaven only knows, but he had brought back at least two enthusiastic memories; of Lime Street, Liverpool, and of the Borough Road.

His intentions were friendly and companionable, and his touching devotion to a weaker man would have redeemed a pirate, but his range of subjects for conversation was limited to those which are apt to become tiresome. I was looking out of the window, wishing that he would find something fresh to talk about, watching the interminable unfolding of the level plain and wondering at the number of what I took to be willows in so dry a place, when the big man touched my arm and said, "Olives." The sympathetic reading of my thoughts, as if he had known instinctively that I had never seen olive trees before and would be glad to have them pointed out, by a man whom I had been inclined to dismiss as a gross-minded bore, was a wholesome reproof.

They were olive trees, and their immediate gain in interest for me on being told so proved once more how completely one's eyes are at the mercy of the associated ideas in the brain behind them. I will not pretend that I did not find the olives ten times more beautiful than when I had supposed them willows. For the rest, they were very like willows, with their soft, grey-green foliage and rounded, leaning shapes. Only when

one of them spun slowly into view near the train, one saw that its tortured limbs had a character which belonged to no willow.

With the advance of evening the spirit of the Castilian plain was beginning shyly to creep out as if from the distant mountains, whose vague purple was deepening every instant. The hot *adobe* walls of the little isolated towns, huddled as if for protection about their tall windowless churches, grew redder and redder as the sun dropped lower, and a grey film of shadow, like the frosting breath of the night wind, spread over the surface of the corn. Against this cool background the procession of poplar trees beside the Arlanzon, which kept more or less close company with the line, each tree being edged with shadow which was only a stronger note of clear colour, stood out with an extraordinary precision and economy of green. So intense were they, and so free from the grosser, woodier character of trees, that they suggested green flames issuing from the ground.

At every station, as the train drew up, with the noise of the brakes was mingled the long-drawn cry of "*A-a-gua fresca!*" We were afraid to drink water, and at one place we bought wine of a lean, fierce-eyed old woman, who watched the coins in my hand as she filled up the bottle from a leather flask, as if she were afraid that I meant to dart away without paying her. At the next station we saw a boy on the platform with a large

IN OLD CASTILE

basket of apricots. I doubted if they were for sale, but James rashly attempted a bargain, framing his question so that it sounded like "What are they for?" "*Para comer; para el estómago*" ("For to eat; for the stomach"), said the boy, with an illustrative gesture, which set the train in a roar. At another place a party of Civil Guards were preparing their supper in their *cuartel*, which was part of the station building. It was queer to see these grave, uniformed men about this domestic occupation, one returning from the village with bread and bottles of wine, another cleaning a saucepan, but the scene was an apt illustration of their curiously isolated and independent life, for they are discouraged from associating with the rest of the people. One seldom sees them talking to anybody but each other, and they move through crowds with a quiet, preoccupied look, as if they were about some secret mission.

At Venta de Baños our talkative friend, still eloquent of the extraordinary cheapness of "life" in Coruña, got out with a "Good night, sirs," which sounded strangely sturdy against the lisping Castilian on the platform. The priest, who had roused himself to shake hands with his benefactor, bringing them for a moment together in a poignant contrast of spiritual refinement and genial brutality, now began to make preparations for refreshment. It was comforting to see that one so unworldly was evidently well cared for in

Logroño. He was provided with a dainty chip basket, such as women use for light shopping in England, covered with a white napkin and vine leaves. A white rose was tucked into the folds of the napkin. He made the pretty courtesy, universal in Spain, of offering what he had to his fellow-travellers, but this time we understood that it was not merely a courtesy, for he pressed a small packet upon us.

"*Merengues*," he said, with a lingering delicacy of intonation which seemed to describe the separate ingredients of the fairy-like shells of cream so perfectly as to leave "*Méringues*" by comparison a clumsy sound. "*Huevos, crema, leche, azúcar—merengues*," he explained, enumerating the ingredients as if to assure us of their purity. "*Me-rengues*"—I can see now the dainty packet of crisply folded white paper upheld in his delicate finger-tips, with his very sweet, angular smile beyond, as he syllabled the word. He spoke no English, but his fine intelligence made our little Spanish go a very long way, and looking back I am surprised at our ease of intercourse, carried on as it was in broken phrases, with a nod of the head or a gesture of the hands to help out the meaning. We were glad to learn that his indisposition was nothing more than a severe headache. Evidently he suffered acutely from the long journey, and he spoke with envy of the speed of railway travelling in England. But his friends at Medina, he said, would soon make him a new man. Appar-

ently he led a very retired life, and knew little of his own country; Vitoria, indeed, was the only important town he had visited. When his meal was finished he accepted a cigarette, which he smoked politely, though evidently without much enjoyment. The tobacco, he said, was a little strong. Afterwards, when I had lit the most delicately flavoured cigarette I have ever smoked, out of his case, I could only marvel at his perseverance with mine. It gave us a queer little shock, by the way, to see that for all his personal refinement he was not free from the national vice of spitting.

Little by little the warm colours faded from the earth, leaving it by contrast extraordinarily cold against a western sky of clear wine red. It was as if the bed of the ancient lake were filled with the ghost of its former waters. Just at the horizon the level-topped hills made a hard violet line against the sky, but within the circle everything was vague and uncertain. One large red star burned low in the south, and presently the priest, half laughingly and half seriously, let down the right-hand window which he had closed against the cold north wind, so that we might look at the sickle moon, but not through glass. Night came quickly by the fading of light without any loss of clearness in the sky, which was absolutely cloudless.

At Valladolid James and I, being dinnerless, made a hasty meal of bread and coffee, the priest

standing in the door of the carriage in a fever of anxiety lest we should miss the train. We three had the compartment to ourselves, and, indeed, by this time there were but few passengers in the whole carriage. We lay down on the long seats. I did not sleep, nor did I want to sleep, and I don't think James was sleeping, but after a time the priest got up very gently and went into the next compartment, where I heard him asking a man to stop whistling lest he should wake us. After that I felt compelled to feign sleep, but when, an hour later, the train stopped at Medina and I heard him saying "*Adios!*" to James in a whisper, and begging him not to disturb me, I could keep up the pretence no longer. As he stood at the door he gently chided the priest, who had come to meet him, for being clumsy with his valise, and so letting in the cold air upon the "*caballeros Ingleses.*" I shall always be glad that we shared the beauty of the Castilian sunset with so perfect a type of the Spanish gentleman.

I was awakened by the train crashing through a granite country. We had passed through Ávila asleep, and now the peaks of the Guadarrama were violet upon a pale dawn. By the time we reached Escorial the world was flooded with a cold grey light, in which the great building loomed up dim and ghostly out of the mountain-side like a tomb of giants. It was now a quarter past four, and already men and women were astir,

moving mysteriously in a stony desert, among twisted olives and dwarf oaks. Soon we came to a pleasant suburb of villas and gardens with trams running in the roads, and presently we saw the cliff-like elevation of the Royal Palace of Madrid.

CHAPTER XIII

BREAKFAST IN MADRID—THE BRIDGE OF SUICIDES—THE PUERTA DEL SOL—THE PRADO—A CAPITAL WITHOUT CHARACTER—THE NEW MADRID—A CITY OF PROHIBITIONS—THE HEAT—MISTAKEN FOR BASQUES—RISKING SUNSTROKE—THE PRADO MUSEUM: CLOSED—THE BOTANICAL GARDEN: CLOSED—"ALGUNA COSA FRESCA"—MADRID AT NIGHT—PLEASURE WITHOUT GAIETY—NIGHTMARES

HALF-PAST five in the morning is rather an awkward time to be landed in a strange capital. Fortunately the buffet was open and a yawning waiter soon provided us with hot coffee and delicious toasted rolls. I don't know if hot buttered toast is the popular *Madrileño* breakfast, or if the earliness of the hour suggested that way of freshening up the rolls of yesterday, but anyhow, as James observed, it is "a pleasant custom." With our coffee we were given glasses of cold water to wash it down. This combination of cold water with coffee or tea or chocolate we found to be universal in Madrid, and it reminded us of the ingenious plan adopted by a friend of ours when reducing his daily allowance of beer. He would call for a glass of beer, an empty tumbler, and a large jug of water. Holding

a sip of beer in his mouth, he would wash it down with a tumblerful of water, thus with a modest half-pint achieving the physical sensations of half a gallon. We diluted our coffee with time only, spinning out our meal and smoking many cigarettes in the large, deserted refreshment-room.

The station being outside the city, we intended to leave our rück-sacks there and to explore the streets until a reasonable hour of the morning, when we could engage rooms at some hotel. We could not find anything in the nature of a cloak-room, however, and had nearly repeated the mistake we made in Bilbao of giving up our bags to an unauthorised person, when a kindly official approached us and advised us to leave them at a little lodge at one of the gates opening into the court of the station. Here a burly man said "*Un franco*" and wrote something illegible with a stump of pencil on the back of a torn fragment of railway map, which he gave to us for a receipt. We set off in what we supposed to be the direction of the city, following some pleasant gardens on the banks of a carefully economised river which reminded us of a Chinese landscape such as that on the willow-pattern plate. We imagined that we must cross the river to reach Madrid; but when we came to a bridge, which I see now must have been the Puente Verde, we recognised that wherever Madrid might be it was not across

the river. I think it must have been here, by the way, that Borrow talked to the man who sold oranges, and watched the gold and silver fish in the green sunny waters. On reading the passage in "The Bible in Spain" I am vividly reminded of this place. James was confident that we ought to turn back, and an appeal to the compass proved him right; instead of east we were going north-west, and walking away from the city. We turned back and presently struck the tree-planted Cuesta (or hill) de la Vega at the south end of the Palace Gardens.

From this point Madrid has rather a sinister look. It reminds one a little of the nightmare cities designed by Martin, and this character is determined, I believe, by the long viaduct, seventy-five feet high, which carries the Calle de Bailen over the western outlet of the Calle de Segovia. I am not surprised that suicides from this viaduct are so frequent that special police are stationed there who approach you uneasily if you only look over, for the effect is oddly disturbing; at once exciting and depressing. From here, too, one is able to get a good idea of the physical features of the city. Madrid is built upon a wind-blown plateau scored with watercourses, and the Calle de Segovia is evidently made in what was once the bed of a torrent.

We were now at the western extremity of the Calle Mayor, which, as we remembered from

the guide-book, leads into the Puerta del Sol, the centre of the city. More than the streets of any foreign city I had seen this comparatively narrow and rudely paved thoroughfare reminded me of the streets of London—of course with differences. Supposing the direction reversed, we were walking as if westward through Fleet Street and the Strand. The Casa de Ayuntamiento, or Mansion House, occupied the site of the Law Courts, and the little market, delightfully fresh and green, a few yards farther on, might have been Covent Garden. Men were flushing the pavements with hose-pipes, and already the sun was so hot that we were glad to walk in the shade. The suggestion of London was not destroyed when we emerged into the Puerta del Sol. Here, indeed, was a meaner Trafalgar Square. I must say that I was acutely disappointed. The name — I did not know its origin—had prepared me for a vast open space of an architectural magnificence worthy to be "the Gate of the Sun." I had imagined something like my vague dreams of the cities of the Incas. Well, the Puerta is sunny enough, in all conscience, but for the rest it is an awkward, irregular oblong, crossed by tramways, and surrounded by shops and second-rate hotels — a meaner Trafalgar Square, in fact. The uninteresting Ministerio de la Gobernacion, or Home Office, stands in the place of the National Gallery. The actual gateway, once the eastern entrance to

the city, which gave the Puerta its name, has long since been moved away. I may say that my first impression of a resemblance to London was not destroyed by closer acquaintance, and if I were asked to give a rough and ready description of Madrid, I should say that it is like a clumsy combination of London and Paris without the special charm of either.

Ten streets open into the Puerta del Sol. We took that in line with the Calle Mayor, the Carrera de San Jerónimo—representing the Mall—which leads downhill, passing on the left the Palacio del Congreso, or House of Commons, guarded by two bronze lions made from captured cannon, into the splendid boulevards of the Prado or "meadow" which takes the place of the Green and St. James's Parks. The famous picture-gallery, the Prado Museum, may be said to represent Buckingham Palace. To complete this rough topographical comparison, and remembering that here west is east, Hyde Park is represented by the Retiro or great Park of Madrid.

We had now crossed the city from west to east, and the earliness of the hour gave us the undistracted impression of a private view. For convenience, Old Madrid may be described as an oblong with rounded corners, measuring about a mile and a half by a mile and a quarter with its greater length from north to south, bounded on the east by the Prado and on the west by the

Gardens of the Royal Palace. From the Puerta del Sol in the centre, the main thoroughfares radiate like the spokes of a wheel, and their outer ends are connected by encircling streets which are appropriately called *Rondas*. North-east of the Prado, a fashionable residential quarter of large houses, laid out in severe parallelograms, is rapidly growing; indeed the difference between a map of 1890 and one of 1901 is astonishing, and the extension is still going on.

Apparently the site of Madrid was arbitrarily chosen as being the geographical centre of Spain. It is not surprising, then, that like most places—and people—that are important for merely arbitrary reasons, it should wear the look of trying to justify its position without any clear idea of how to do so. To put the matter brutally, and without reference to mere size, Madrid is not big enough for its boots. It contains what one is reduced to calling "fine buildings," but the general note of its architecture is ambition without imagination. Even the Royal Palace, though impressive in scale and situation, is a great opportunity bungled. One might suppose that having no definite character of her own, but feeling the eyes of Spain upon her, Madrid has been driven into spasmodic and unrelated attempts to imitate the character of other places—as a man without real personality, but forced by position into the public eye, is apt to spend his life in a series of "poses."

Madrid, so to speak, doesn't mean anything;

she is merely a collection of buildings. That some of them happen to be fine buildings doesn't make her any more significant. Her lack of meaning is nowhere more apparent than in her churches, and this tempts one to hazard a guess why as a city she fails to touch the imagination. The real passion of Spain is religion, and though Madrid is the geographical and political centre of Spain, she is not the spiritual centre. Failing to express the spiritual life of the country, there is nothing else for her to express.

In other countries it is possible for a city to be dissociated from religion and still have character. London and Paris, for example, are not peculiarly significant of the religious life of England and France. Notre-Dame is far from being the central thought of Paris, and if you were asked to point out the building which expresses the soul of London you would not, I think, choose either St. Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey. But in England and France religion is not, and for centuries has not been, a matter of the supreme importance that it is in Spain; the passionate belief of England and France is concerned with other things than religion. Anything passionately believed in manages to express itself with character and dignity, and since in England it is not religion but commerce and government that are passionately believed in, the character and dignity of London is in her expression of commerce and government. The matter is too big to be treated

in a book of impressions by a passing observer, but I think I may venture to say that the ideas of commerce and government have not yet taken the place of religion in the consciousness of Spain as a whole, and consequently Madrid, in failing to express religion, has been reduced to the expression of beliefs which are as yet merely fragmentary and half-hearted. She is not yet central in the soul of Spain as London and Paris are central in the souls of England and France.

Madrid's lack of any but a geographical and official centrality is no doubt emphasised by unfortunate physical accidents. For one thing, the Royal Palace is separated by the whole width of the city from the quarters of the aristocracy. It is as if Buckingham Palace were plumped down in St. Paul's Churchyard while St. James's and Belgravia were planted out at Shepherd's Bush. There is no reason to suppose that this topographical division between Court and Society has any political significance, but it is not without effect in depriving Madrid of that character of organic unity which should belong to a capital. Even the House of Lords and the House of Commons are at opposite ends of the city.

Still, with all these defects of organisation, Madrid is the capital of Spain. Borrow found it the most interesting capital in the world, and after observing with rather significant vagueness, "I will not dwell upon its streets, its edifices, its public squares, its fountains, though some of these

are remarkable enough," he gives the reason why he found it interesting, "the population!" That reason remains equally important to-day, and though the present population of Madrid can hardly be said to be so "strictly Spanish" as it was in 1885, it still resembles the population of other capitals in being representative of the whole nation.

It seems to me more than probable that the importance of Madrid lies in the future; that, in relation to the life of Spain as a whole, she is a "young city." Oddly enough, it is in the newer portion of the city which lies between the Boulevards of La Castellana and Recolétos and the Calle de Alcalá that one begins to find character, the expression of a vital and definite meaning. Throughout Spain there are evidences of a renewed commercial and political activity, and if it is true that, at the same time, religion is losing its hold upon the masses of the people, Madrid by frankly and whole-heartedly expressing a belief in material progress, and social and political organisation, may well become the real as well as the geographical and official centre of Spain. This is not the place to compare the respective merits of the "ideas" of spiritual and material progress—if, indeed, they are really incompatible. One may regret the passing of Spain's unique spiritual vitality, if it is passing, but a religion which is no longer believed is better unexpressed in stone. A sincere gasworks is better than an insincere cathedral.

Madrid's opportunity, then, may be precisely

in the decline of that unique spiritual vitality of Spain which in the past she failed to express. Certainly, for a city of her age, she presents to a quite remarkable degree the look of a city still in the making; and consequently one's disappointment in her as she exists is a little relieved by acute curiosity as to what she may become. Old Madrid remains a geographical expression, by comparison with the other cities of Spain almost as featureless as the North Pole, with certain romantic traditions and associations which are not recorded by anything that appeals to the imagination. She does not, like most capitals, reflect the character and ideals of the country to which she belongs. She is a monument to a blunder which may be disregarded in considering the spirit and history of old Spain as a whole. The new Madrid is apparently in close touch with the development of the new Spain which for better or worse is emerging from the old; and from indications which already exist it may be assumed that her character as a city will reflect the character of that development.

These impressions of Madrid and speculations about her future, though necessarily superficial, are slightly more considered than those which James and I exchanged as we sat rather sleepily on a bench in the shady Paseo del Prado in the early hours of a July morning; but for convenience I set them down before going on to describe the sum of trivial experiences from which they are derived. The line of boulevards running north and south

from the place where we sat recalls the Avenues of the Champs Élysées and the Bois de Boulogne without the Arc de Triomphe—which, as we found later, is represented here by the Puerta de Alcalá in the Plaza de la Independéncia. The whole of the Prado quarter with its numerous fountains and monuments, with, indeed, too many conflicting centres of interest, though less happily "composed," is an even pleasanter place for lounging than the corresponding one in Paris. Perhaps it gains in character as a place for human recreation and refreshment from the very absence of design; the interest being scattered, so to speak, without regard to the general effect, as one would break up the arrangement of furniture in a room to encourage freedom of conversation. The look of the quarter and the name of the park beyond, the Buen Retiro or "Pleasant Retreat," suggests, as James remarked, that Madrid is "a good place to get out of." A small circular pit to collect water at the base of every tree in the Paseo is a significant indication of the summer heat, which we were already beginning to find almost overpowering.

The Museum of the Prado, a long building of pale brick and white stone, is at any rate externally a model of what a picture gallery out to be, though it was not originally intended for that purpose but for a Museum of Natural History. While sufficiently attractive and dignified, it suggests a self-denying modesty in the architect, as if he meant you to see at once that a building of that size and

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yet so simple must contain something important. A fine bronze figure of Velazquez before the entrance admirably sums up the nature of its contents; nothing more is wanted. At this hour, of course, the gallery was closed, and we turned in the direction of the Botanical Garden, which seemed to promise a coolness as delightful as a draught of spring water. But this also was closed, and we already had the first beginnings of the resentful feeling which afterwards led us to call Madrid the City of Prohibitions—"A place," as James put it, "chiefly remarkable for the number of things you mustn't do." In order, as he said, to make our first impressions as complete as possible before anybody interfered with them, we walked to the end of the Paseo and descended the hill as far as the railway station of Mediodía in the extreme south-east corner of the city. From this point one recognises that the long line of boulevards which divides old Madrid from the eastern suburb is formed, like the Calle de Segovia, in the bed of an ancient watercourse.

By the time we returned to the Puerta del Sol to choose our hotel the city was well astir. We were struck by the number of kerbstone merchants and also by the frequency of Anglo-Saxon types—amongst them the inevitable American art student walking with his easel in the direction of the Prado. Being in the capital, we thought it advisable to select reasonably good quarters, and made our first inquiries at a decent but by no means luxurious-looking hotel in the Puerta. As is usual and ad-

visable in Spain, we suggested approximate terms to a dull-eyed youth in the vestibule, who shook his head and replied:

"*Beinte*"—for so he pronounced it—"*pesetas*" ("Twenty pesetas").

It was quite evident that he named the sum at random, and we gently remarked that we didn't want a room in the very best position, but he only continued bleating stupidly:

"*Beinte pesetas.*"

The incident struck me as characteristic of the blindly imitative and amateurish way in which things are done in Madrid. I believe you can put up modestly at the Ritz in Paris for the equivalent of "*Beinte pesetas,*" and we afterwards learned that good accommodation can be had at this very hotel in Madrid for about half that sum. There is nothing offensive in high terms being asked on a basis of observed facts with a reasonable expectation of getting them; but this was the kind of blundering extortion which is an insult to the intelligence. In a capital one expects to be imposed upon, but one expects it to be done skilfully and with an air; it was the clumsiness of the thing that angered us. We turned abruptly away, and then the youth seemed to come to life and followed us to the door with an alternative proposal, which we declined to listen to. At the Hotel del Universo, in an almost equally good position, we were quite comfortably housed for nine *pesetas* each a day.

When we put ourselves on board a tramcar to fetch our rück-sacks from the station we felt that we had come to a city of prohibitions with a vengeance. The inside of the car was plastered with notices: "It is forbidden to smoke," "It is forbidden to spit," "It is forbidden to speak to the driver," "Please keep your tickets;" and we got off to collide almost with a post bearing a board which requested us to "Keep to the left." These notices, though of course perfectly reasonable in themselves, have a singularly irritating effect when they occur in a place which is remarkable rather for its lack of civil organisation. In Germany they would be quite "in the picture," but in Madrid they somehow give the impression that the authorities have suddenly, and without thinking of their own conditions, imitated the customs of other places and are consequently overdoing them. One feels that they are not related to any central scheme of municipal government. They suggest not so much a regard for the general comfort as a vexatious interference with the liberty of the individual. Lately I read in a newspaper that Madrid has adopted the institution peculiarly alien to Southern life and needs, as one would suppose, of "Sunday closing" of wine-shops. These are trivial matters to record; but as straws show the way of the wind, they all helped to make up the impression we received in Madrid of a vague uneasiness—like the uneasiness of a man who is not sure of himself, who takes his cue from this person and that, and

when he is called upon to be firm, hits out blindly. The effect of the notices upon James was amusing to see; directly he boarded a tramcar he seemed seized with the desire to smoke, and he generally compromised matters by standing on the little platform at the end, where he could enjoy his cigarette with the consciousness that he was half breaking a regulation.

Before we got back to our hotel we had begun to recognise that the summer heat of Madrid is a very serious matter. We envied the tram drivers and conductors their suits of brown holland and the soldiers their uniforms of grey-blue linen. Evidently the question of summer clothing is of grave importance to the dandy of Madrid. A young man in a holland knickerbocker suit, with a pith helmet and black silk stockings, was the centre of a little half-admiring, half-critical group of his acquaintances. One felt that he was the *dernier cri*. Fortunately our room at the hotel looked out into a sort of well where the sun did not penetrate, and the room itself was admirably arranged to give not only the feeling but the look of coolness, with a stone floor and walls of hard white plaster. The top of the tall wardrobe being chained to the wall suggested earthquakes. The only covering to the beds was a sheet and a light counterpane, and the most prominent object on the table was a large carafe of porous earthenware, beaded with moisture, which diffused an atmosphere of coolness throughout the room. It is

amusing to recall how quickly our resolution not to drink water in Spain broke down. Disregarding the awful experience of an artist friend of ours, whose whole class of pupils took typhoid from polluted water in Granada a year or two earlier, with the death of one and the madness of another, we drank greedily, and for the next hour or so bared ourselves to the stone floor and talked, touched, tasted, and thought nothing but water. It was only by a fortunate accident that, when well advanced in the removal of our clothes, we discovered that our window faced across the well, at a dozen feet, the open window of a room in which a very quiet and sober family were assembled.

A friend of ours lived somewhere in Madrid, so we braved the sun to visit the British Consulate, where we hoped to get his address. We had some difficulty in finding the Consulate, which has changed quarters since the 1901 edition of Baedeker with which we were provided, but finally got upon the track of it in the pleasant north-eastern suburb. It was here that we achieved what, as Englishmen who wished to pass without notice in a foreign country, we could not help regarding as a great "score." We were just about to enter the building when a tall and obviously English gentleman in a flannel suit and straw hat came out. At sight of us he stopped, with a puzzled expression, and spoke to us rather sharply in Spanish. When we answered him in our own language he smiled broadly and said:

"I thought you were Basques, and wondered what on earth you were doing at the Consulate."

He was connected with the Embassy, he said, and at once put us in the way of getting the information we needed, inviting us to make use of the telephone and, as a last word, warning us against the sun and giving us some friendly advice in the matter of clothing, which we had afterwards good reason to remember, though the scantiness of our luggage did not allow us to take advantage of it. The officials at the Consulate, who seemed to think us remarkably enterprising in travelling third-class in Spain, were acquainted with our friend C—— and gave us his address.

Though evidently planned in imitation of the part of Paris which surrounds the Place de l'Étoile, this north-eastern residential quarter of Madrid seems to be achieving a character of its own with the charm which always rewards the frank recognition of practical needs and local peculiarities of climate and situation. You are reminded of Paris, but you would never for a moment imagine that you were in Paris, and the chief reason, I think, is that here human comfort rather than effect has been aimed at. It is or at any rate looks more practical than Paris. The handsome red and white houses are admirably adapted to the extremes of heat and cold which mark the climate of Madrid, and the wide streets and squares are well planted with trees. Everything seems to be arranged for the enjoyment of outdoor life when it is possible,

and for a comfortable retreat when it is not. As an illustration of modern domestic architecture on a large scale, I should think this part of Madrid must be unique in Europe, the newer parts of most cities being more gradually evolved from the old.

The focus of the quarter is the circular Plaza de la Independéncia which, with its massive white gateway, the old Puerta de Alcalá, still bearing traces of the French bombardment in 1808, may be said to represent the Place de l'Étoile in Paris. On the south-east of the Plaza, which is prettily decorated with flower-beds and palm trees, is the principal entrance to the Retiro park. We returned to the Puerta del Sol by the Calle de Alcalá, the widest street in the city and a favourite route for public processions, which seems to carry the brightness of the residential quarter into the heart of old Madrid. The Ministerio de Guerra, a most peaceful-looking and attractive building with a beautiful garden, stands at the corner where the Calle de Alcalá is intersected by the main line of boulevards. Madrid is the only city I know where the new is emphatically an improvement on the old, which has merely the dulness without the beauty or the dignity of age.

In our anxiety to see the pictures in the Prado Museum we disregarded the friendly counsel of the gentleman from the Embassy and foolishly set out directly after lunch. The heat of the sun was terrible; we walked slowly, even to speak or to

turn the head seemed an immense effort, and when we emerged from the deserted Carrera de San Jerónimo we hesitated before the wide open space of the Plaza de las Cortes as if it had been the fire zone of a battle-field. We crossed over to the Paseo in a series of zig-zags, taking "cover" in the thin, circular shade of every acacia tree, and when we reached the Museum we found it closed. Why, I don't know; it certainly wasn't raining, and allowing for that possibility, Baedeker says the Museum is open daily from ten to four, except on Sundays and festivals, when it closes at one. This was a Saturday. Assuming that it was a festival, it was perhaps as well that we did not know the name of the saint. We did not trust ourselves to speak, but turned instinctively to plunge into the thick shade of the Botanical Garden. It was closed until four o'clock.

Then James said a few words which made the men lying on the walks of the Paseo with their heads on the grass stir uneasily and cross themselves. I was beyond connected speech, and could only murmur faintly, "Buen Retiro." Under that sky of brass the trees of the Paseo gave but a mockery of shade. Walking in single file, at a dozen paces apart, to avoid the irritation of human contact, we climbed the hill of burning marl which is called, I believe, the Calle de Alberto Bosch. I could hear James repeating, "Ponds and fountains, ponds and fountains," like one babbling in delirium. We reached the entrance to the Retiro to

find the whole park occupied by an Exposition of Industries. The very title, with its suggestion of turning wheels and the smell of lubricating oil, was a piece of wanton cruelty. A smiling official in a white linen suit came forward and waved tickets of admission at us. I don't know what we said, but I am persuaded that we only confirmed the Continental opinion of the manners of travelling Englishmen. I have a picture of a dazed official in a white linen suit, with a smile dead on his lips, biting the corner of a blue ticket of admission to a blazing Exposition of Industries.

We crawled downhill again and fell into a tram-car. It put us out on the south and shadier side of the Puerta del Sol, but the farthest from our hotel. It was a physical impossibility to cross the Puerta, and like creatures of the ooze backing from the light, we retreated along the Calle de Carretas beside the Home Office and drifted into a café. I found myself murmuring to the waiter, "*Alguna cosa fresca.*" It was not idiomatic Spanish, but he understood. He stood for a moment with his finger to the side of his nose and then said, with conviction, "*Helados!*" He brought us two lemon ices with quilled *azucarillos* and two tumblers of water. Probably we could not have chosen anything worse, but we were beyond discretion, and for a time, at any rate, we enjoyed the illusion of relief. The cool, dark interior of this café, which was near the post-office, reminded us of the old-fashioned eating-houses in the City of London,

and the few men seated at the tables looked like business men stealing an hour from their desks. Occasionally a boy strolled in to try, without success, to sell lottery tickets, or to beg the little photographs of Goya etchings which are given away in boxes of wax matches. When we felt able to move again we left the café, and, after hesitating like timid bathers on the shadowed edge of the sun-flooded Puerta, crossed over, and, with belated wisdom, went to our room, took off the greater part of our clothes, and lay down on our beds.

I awoke suddenly to find the room strangely dark, and switching on the electric light, looked at my watch. It was a quarter to eight. We had slept for nearly four hours. From the window of the dining-room the Puerta presented an extraordinary spectacle. During our belated *siesta* Madrid had waked up, and it looked as if an invading army had poured into the city. The Puerta, still golden on the one side from the low sun, was black with people, among whom the trams moved slowly with a clanging of bells which came faintly up to the window. Nobody seemed to be about any business or even to move with intention. They wandered in every direction as if they had only just arrived and had not yet decided where they wanted to go or what to do. I have never seen a spectacle so aptly suggestive of the "crawling hive."

After dinner we went to a café in the Carrera de

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San Jerónimo. Owing I suppose to the comparative narrowness of the pavements in the Puerta, one misses from the centre of Madrid the outside café-life which is such a characteristic feature of Paris. The cafés themselves lose in colour and interest from the absence of women. The small number of people at the tables puzzled us at first; it was as if all Madrid had disappeared again in the interval of dinner, but when we walked eastward into the Salon del Prado we understood the reason. By night all Madrid comes to life and pours out into the line of boulevards which extends from the Prado northward to the Hipódromo. Here we found great crowds of people of every class, and every provision for the enjoyment of the evening promenade; an American circus, open-air bars and cafés, a kinematograph and music. An extraordinary number and variety of cooling drinks were advertised on the outside of the cafés; English beer, iced vermouth, sarsaparilla, orgeat, and American cocktails. The want of unanimity in spelling this last word was amusing; one saw "Kok-tails," "Kock-tails," "Cok-tails," and, with triumphant originality, "Koki-Koki." Hot milk punch was quite a popular drink. The night was still very hot, and the obsession of sunlight remained so strong that I found myself wincing whenever we passed under the arc lamps. The shadows of the pine and acacia trees on the pavement, blue and luminous and relieved in different planes, were most beautiful.

For all the numbers of people, the life and movement and the provision for amusement, there was wanting the gaiety of Paris. The world of Madrid seems to take its pleasures in a sort of cynical desperation. Not only between one class and another, but between different members of the same class, there was a remarkable absence of the air of good-fellowship. Apparently there was nothing to bind the people together but a community of tastes; they walked, they listened to music, they drank together, but they remained a collection of units. Very noticeable, too, was the absence of coquetry in the women. Among those who might be assumed to be "respectable" there was a curious indifference to the regard and comments of men, while the obvious *demi-mondaines* were without any of the little graces which in other cities women of the same class at any rate assume to relieve the matter-of-fact commercialism of their *métier*. Here they walked up and down, or more often sat on a seat, waiting with an air of bored indifference. In most cases they were accompanied by an elderly *dueña* who seemed much more alive to opportunities than themselves.

That night we paid the penalty of our rash excursion into the midday sun. That we should not sleep soundly after our late *siesta*, though we had been travelling all the previous night, was hardly surprising, but what broken rest we had resolved itself into a succession of terrible night-

mares, dominated by the obsession of the sun, mocked by the sight and sound of running water. One of my dreams was interesting for its apparent anticipation of a visual impression which I had not yet received. I dreamt that we were in England, though still in Spain, at a picnic attended by several people I knew intimately. The scene of the picnic was an extraordinarily faithful anticipation of the gorge of the Tagus as seen from the old Moorish walls above the Alcántara bridge at Toledo. We were playing a game of twirling buckets, so that they flew several hundred yards like quoits, and fell, still spinning, into the middle of the river. James made a bad shot and his bucket fell under the nearer bank. A locomotive engine broke from its moorings, and plunging into the river sailed grandly across, to come into collision with a high brick wall which crumbled slowly before it. Confusion fell upon the picnic, and then James, who was in his shirt sleeves, took out his watch, and looking up with a comical expression of mock terror, said, "How long does it take to walk to Truro?"

I awoke laughing hysterically but feeling very ill, with a pressure on the top of my head and a throbbing in my ears. James was asleep, but crying out in a strangled voice. I was so scared that I woke him, and we arranged what to do in case either of us was taken seriously ill. For the rest of the night we hardly slept. Down in the well some domestic operations were still going on,

with the clanking of a bucket which probably influenced my dream. A woman sang snatches of song to a little child who talked in the quick, sharp tones of fever, and then moaned fretfully, because of the heat.

CHAPTER XIV

TERROR OF THE SUN—THE BOTANICAL GARDEN—THE PRADO MUSEUM—VELAZQUEZ—GOYA—TITIAN—GENERAL CHARACTER OF SPANISH PAINTING—WHY WE DID NOT GO TO THE BULL-FIGHT—"TOREROS"—THE ANDALUSIAN GIPSY—THE HOUSE OF THE BOMB—THE ROYAL PALACE—THE PLAZA MAYOR—AUTOS-DA-FÉ—THE RASTRO—MADRID AFTER MIDNIGHT—THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

WE had learned our lesson so thoroughly that the next morning we had to screw up our courage to leave the cool shelter of our room. We knew now something of the terrible reality under the jaunty phrase, "a touch of the sun." The physical discomfort was nothing to the feeling of terror produced; for several days I found myself guarding not only my movements but my thoughts, for the simplest idea was like a material substance in a bruised brain, and I involuntarily carried my head level to prevent the cargo shifting. It was not so much the heat we dreaded as the sun, and even at this distance of time exposure to a bright light, whether natural or artificial, brings on a mild recurrence of my terrors.

James being a man of resolution went to mass at the cathedral, but my one anxiety was to get

to the Prado Museum, while the day was yet young and comparatively cool. To my great joy the Botanical Garden was open, and I spent a very pleasant hour there waiting for James. A school of girls in grey print dresses, the younger with black straw hats, the elder with lace *mantillas*, amused themselves decorously under the care of nuns. The garden contains a good collection of different varieties of acacia, plane, elm, and other trees. Even at that hour of the morning the sun was very powerful, and in a photograph which I took of the long avenue the contrasts of light and shade are so violent that it looks like a snow scene.

For us, as for most visitors to Madrid, the Prado Museum meant Velazquez, and on entering we made our way at once to the Salon containing his principal works. I think we both had the grace to recognise at once, despairingly, that in order to look at Velazquez in Madrid he must be made the object of a special journey. You can't take him in your stride. We could give at most a couple of mornings to the task of a fortnight, and in any case a book of miscellaneous impressions is not the place for any but a passing reference to a subject which could only be treated properly in a whole volume by a person specially qualified for the purpose.

What that qualification must be was made very clear to me when I found myself in front of "The Surrender of Breda," which has been called

the greatest historical picture in the world. My first thought was that no painter loses more than Velazquez in reproduction. I had seen many reproductions of "Las Lanzas" ("The Lances"), as it is lovingly called, in colour and in black and white, but none of them had in the least prepared me for the original picture. At the same time I remembered that my first impression on seeing the works of Millet in the Louvre was one of slight disappointment. They were so little better than their reproductions with which I was familiar. The reason for these two exactly opposite experiences, which must have occurred to innumerable people, is not, I think, merely that Velazquez was a greater artist than Millet, but that he was more specifically a painter. In spite of their universal appeal of effective composition, truth to nature and that nobility of temper which is so well illustrated by the compassionate courtesy of the victor in "The Surrender," so that, as James said, "any fool can see they are great pictures," the pictures of Velazquez are finally painter's pictures in a sense in which the works of artists equally great are not. The qualities which give Velazquez his unique position as an artist are precisely those qualities which only a painter can properly appreciate, and they are the first to disappear in any process of reproduction. It is not a matter of colour; greater colourists than Velazquez lose less —even when translated into black and white. It is a matter, finally, of painting; of the management

of tones, of the actual use of paint in representing objects on a flat surface. So far as painting in this sense is concerned, that one room in the Prado Museum may be said to cover the whole subject; in painting *qua* painting nothing greater, if so great, has been done. It is well to remember, however, that without detraction from the greatness of Velazquez, there is a consideration of art, equally concerned with the reproduction of objects on a flat surface by means of pigment, that he leaves absolutely untouched.

Velazquez has lately become so much "the fashion" that this distinction is in danger of being overlooked. People will speak of Velazquez and, say, Leonardo da Vinci in the same breath, without remembering that they were not even trying to do the same thing. There is no common standard by which their works can be judged. The obvious differences in their pictures are not due to different degrees of ability. Nor are they due to differences of method as depending on period. If the two painters had been contemporary and neighbours, their pictures would have been fundamentally unlike. To compare Velazquez and Leonardo is like—as somebody said of another matter—comparing "four pounds of butter with four o'clock." They cannot be discussed in common terms.

The fundamental difference between them will become clearer, I think, if one remembers the old division of all mankind into Platonists and

Aristotelians. This division holds good of artists; there are, always have been, and always will be painters whose concern is primarily with ideas, and painters whose concern is primarily with appearances. Both Platonist and Aristotelian painters are concerned with ideas, and both are concerned with appearances, but one paints appearances to express his ideas, and the other gets his ideas from painting appearances. This fundamental difference of attitude to art is not necessarily expressed in a choice of subject. If it were, the difference in aim would always be obvious, and we should not hear people saying, "Velazquez was a greater, or a lesser, artist than Leonardo or Titian." The painter of ideas, the Platonist in painting, is not necessarily a painter of "stories" or of "allegories." He may be a painter of portraits.

Anybody can see that Botticelli and Velazquez —to take extreme examples of the Platonist and the Artistotelian in painting—are not comparable. They cannot be judged by the same standard. The non-comparability of Leonardo and Velazquez is not quite so obvious; that of Titian and Velazquez is a great deal less. Yet they are fundamentally unlike, even though it is said that Velazquez was influenced by Titian. What Velazquez learned from Titian was purely technical, as Mr. Sargent may quite conceivably have "taken tips" from Burne-Jones. Nobody, however, would even begin to judge the works of these two modern

painters by the same standard. The fundamental difference between Velazquez and Titian comes out when both painted the same subject. Velazquez painted a beautiful nude model, and called her "Venus." Titian painted his idea of Venus, and used a beautiful nude model for its expression. Both in a sense painted a "portrait" of a young woman, both used paint and canvas, and there the resemblance ends.

It is this exclusive concern of Velazquez with painting rather than with the expression of ideas in paint, which makes him lose so much in reproduction. A photograph of a Titian Venus, allowing for the absence of colour, gives you a very good notion of the original picture, but a photograph of the Venus of Velazquez, apart from colour, is little better than a photograph of the actual model as she posed for him, because the quality of painting which makes the Rokeby Venus a great work of art, is almost entirely lost in a photograph.

The dependence of Velazquez upon actual workmanship, too, makes him very difficult to "write about." A painter writing for painters could say a great deal about the pictures in the Salon of Velazquez; a layman writing for laymen, beyond "describing" their subjects, can say very little more than that they are great works of art. As we moved from one picture to another, from "The Surrender" to the glowing and energetic "Las Hilanderas" or "The Tapestry Weavers,"

and from that to the extraordinarily modern-looking paintings of the Villa Medici gardens, I felt more and more strongly how nearly impossible it was to say anything about them, even supposing I was competent, except in technical language. I don't mean that the layman is unable to appreciate their power and beauty. That he is not was illustrated in a remarkable manner almost under my nose. I had gone into the small room which contains "Las Meninas," leaving James before the picture, so full of a pagan joy in life, which is called "Los Borrachos" or "The Topers." There were not more than three other people in the Salon. Presently James joined me, looking sheepish, amused, and pleased all at once. I asked him what had happened, and he told me that while he was looking at the picture a poorly dressed man, who might have been the original of one of the figures, came and stood beside him. They tried to express to each other their delight in the painting with words and gestures, and finally, as if in despair of other expression, the man flung himself upon James and embraced him. I don't think that any painter need desire a finer compliment.

Certainly no picture is exhibited under happier or more honourable conditions than the masterpiece of Velazquez representing a momentary incident in the life of the royal family, which is known as "Las Meninas." The picture practically forms the fourth wall of the small, soberly-

hung room in which it is placed, so that you feel as if you stood in the foreground of the palace interior which is represented. You stand, in fact, where stood the king and queen, whose placidly watching faces are reflected in the painted mirror at the back of the picture. The painting itself is faced on the opposite wall by an actual mirror, in which it is reflected with an astonishing illusion of reality. After a time the feeling of being in the picture is quite uncanny; there is nothing in the room to disturb the impression, and then you begin to recognise what in studying the figures of the little princess and her attendants you might otherwise have overlooked, that the chief triumph of the picture is in its rendering of air and space. Velazquez may be said to have destroyed the reality of the canvas on which he painted; you look not at a picture but into a room.

I suppose the Salon of Velazquez is the most fully representative collection of the works of a single painter in Europe. There are good examples of Velazquez in other galleries, in our own National Gallery for example, but every phase of his work may be studied in proper sequence at the Prado. When we left the room I felt rather like a plumber who has been "to look at his job," and then gone away again without touching it. I had learnt what was there, the importance of the job, and that was all. Wishing to make the most of our opportunities by confining our attention as far as possible to

special features, we merely skimmed the Long Gallery, and found our way to the Salon of Goya on the ground floor. We noticed, by the way, that as a place for the exhibition of pictures the inside of the Prado Museum does not fulfil the promise of the outside. With the exception of the Salon of Velazquez, it is not well lighted.

Goya was for us a new experience in painting. His work has been described as a protest against everything that had been painted before, and that seems to me true. The only preceding painter to whom he bears the slightest resemblance is, oddly enough, Gainsborough—particularly in the portrait group of the Osuna family—but the influences which led up to Gainsborough were entirely wanting in the case of Goya. In relation to the art of his time and country he was without parentage. On the other hand he might fairly be called the father of impressionism, at any rate in figure painting, and he was evidently a powerful influence upon Manet. Most of Goya's work gives you the impression that it was painted at a sitting, as if he felt that a picture which could not be finished in a day, and a single mood, ought not to be attempted. His pictures, particularly the designs for tapestry of rustic *fêtes*, have an extraordinary vitality and spontaneity, as if their swiftness of execution were only the result of long thought and patient observation beforehand, so that he came to his work knowing exactly what to do. They are a sort of shorthand of painting.

Goya's own often-quoted saying, "Painting consists of sacrifices," might be taken to mean not only the necessity for leaving out of a picture everything that does not matter, but that still harder necessity for waiting until the impulse is so strong and so complete, the subject so clearly "seen," that the work can be finished at a blow. You feel that at intervals in a very full and varied life, apparently forgetful of art, he picked up his brushes and dashed off a picture at white heat; but this very character of improvisation implies that the "fundamental brainwork" was done before he touched the canvas. His work shows a remarkable intensity and wide range of moods, from the black and bloody "Dos de Mayo" recording the massacre which took place a few hundred yards from the Museum in 1808, more horrible for its bad lighting, to the pure gaiety of "Blind Man's Buff." More than any painter he seems to me to reflect the life of the country to which he belonged; he is more peculiarly Spanish even than Velazquez. Besides the paintings of Goya, the Salon contains a large and interesting collection of his drawings and etchings.

We had come prepared to see famous pictures by Spanish painters, but as we had not studied the catalogue beforehand we had no notion of the other treasures in the Museum, and so our further exploration was full of pleasant discoveries of Fra Angelico and Mantegna and Memling and Van der Weyden. Almost at the last moment

we remembered to have heard that there were some fine Titians in the Prado. A hurried examination of the Long Gallery and the Rotunda showed us nothing by Titian, and we were on the point of giving up the search when James caught sight of a direction at the foot of a staircase. We ascended and so, almost by accident, came to the small upper rooms which contain the pictures of the Venetian school; the "Madonna with St. Anthony" of Giorgione, and the "Bacchanal," the "Fecundity," and other works of Titian.

In the presence of these glowing canvases, with their haunting effect of a meaning behind the actual scenes, it was impossible not to recognise that they represented not merely a different "school" or "style" of painting, or a greater or lesser degree of technical skill, or a different temperament, but an entirely different art from that of Velazquez. To take an illustration from the art of writing, the difference between the art of Titian and that of Velazquez is like the difference between the use of words as symbols of ideas and the use of words merely for their dictionary meanings. For want of a better definition I am compelled to call it the difference between Platonism and Aristotelianism. On a frankly superficial acquaintance with Spanish painting, I am struck by the almost entire absence from it of what may be called the Platonic spirit. From the Spanish painters of the fifteenth century

down to those of the present day, it is all sheer painting. The single exception is Goya, and even his idealism is mainly destructive; it is an idealism turned inside out, as it were. In spite of their differences, Ribera, Zurbarán, Velazquez, Murillo, and even the modern painters Zuloaga and Gandara can all be compared by the same standard, discussed in the same terms. There is no common standard of comparison between Velazquez and Leonardo, or Velazquez and Titian, or—to take modern examples — between Mr. Sargent and Burne-Jones, or Bonnat and Puvis de Chavannes.

This absence of the Platonic spirit from Spanish painting would not be so remarkable if the Spaniards as a race were not full of it. "Don Quixote" and the writings of Saint Teresa are typical expressions of the Platonic spirit in imaginative literature and theology. The only conclusion one can arrive at is that though Spain has produced great painters *qua* painters, including perhaps the very greatest, she has not expressed herself so characteristically in painting as she has in literature.

Later in the afternoon we called upon C—— at his flat near the Plaza de la Independéncia. We had thus an opportunity of seeing the interior of a modern Spanish house and were struck by its comfort and convenience. The building was provided with a lift, and the problem caused by the extremes of climate in Madrid seemed to have been solved satisfactorily. C—— took us

to an open-air café in the Paseo de Recolétos, where we sat sipping vermouth and watching the people coming back from the bull-fight; the *matadores* in carriages, as became the heroes of the occasion, and the *picadores* on horseback.

I am afraid that the distinction of having been to Spain without seeing a bull-fight is in my case purely accidental. James said from the first that, as a matter of principle, he would not attend a *Corrida*, but I fully intended to do so. On this, the only good opportunity, however, I felt so unwell from my exposure to the sun the day before that I frankly "funked" it. I wish now that I had been more resolute, because the bull-fight is a unique opportunity for seeing the Spanish people *en fête*. With regard to the actual sport of bull-fighting I believe it is impossible for a stranger to form any idea of what it means, and so he is naturally impressed most of all by the accompanying cruelty. Bull-fighting is cruel, but it is only more cruel than fox-hunting or coursing, in that bulls and horses are bigger animals, and the latter more sentimentally dear to ourselves, than foxes and hares. The other objection to bull-fighting that it is demoralising to the spectators is no doubt in a measure true, but it cannot be much more demoralising than the average musical comedy.

The important thing to remember is, that bull-fighting is not a mere torturing and killing of bulls

and horses, but a game of science and skill, with a ritual so elaborate that a stranger may be pardoned for seeing nothing but the accidents. The intelligent Spaniard may enjoy the cruelty, but he goes to see the game. C——'s experience is worth quoting. Physically and mentally he is a man of a rather sensitive type, and the first time he went to a bull-fight he was so disgusted by the cruelty that he had to come away before it was over. He made up his mind that he would not go again, but after a time was persuaded to do so. He went again and again, and as he began to understand the subtleties of the game and to look out for points of skill, he ceased to notice the cruelty. It was not that he became hardened to it, but that his attention was otherwise engaged. Only now, after innumerable visits to the *Corrida*, is he able to appreciate the refinements of technique, to see when a bull is well or badly killed.

C—— did not pretend that bull-fighting is not a cruel sport, but said that when you add to skill the necessity for a high degree of courage in those who take part in it, the accompanying cruelty is not so prominent as it appears to the shocked senses of a stranger, who sees only a rough-and-tumble butchery of bulls and horses. We gathered from what C—— said that the worst feature of bull-fighting, as of so many other sports, is the vicious circle of hangers-on. The term *chulos* covers, besides the genuine bull-fighters, a large number of men who have perhaps only once assisted

at a *Corrida* in a minor capacity. They are generally the lowest characters in the city, idle and boastful, the associates of "confidence men," and often living on the wages of prostitutes. We saw several of these evil-looking creatures hanging about the cafés. They make a great point of assuming the correct details of the genuine *torero's* appearance—the closely-cropped head, with one lock twisted up to show a little bare patch at the poll just below the brim of the wide felt hat.

With the return of the people from the bull-fight the Paseo quickly became crowded. Every class was represented, from Parisian-frocked ladies and English-tailored young dandies to men and women of the working classes with their families. Red—a beautiful faded red—and yellow was a favourite combination of colour in the dresses of the poorer people, forming an admirable foil to a dark complexion. The water-sellers wandered up and down with their shrill cries of "*Quien quiere agua! A-gua fresca!*" and the cafés did a brisk trade in vermouth and cocktails. An Andalusian gipsy, a very old woman with bright eyes and a cunning brown face, carrying a water-jar poised on her hip, wanted to tell our fortunes; from James's right eye, she said, it was evident that he was soon to receive a large fortune; while his left, alas! told her that there was a woman sorrowing for him.

C—— dined with us at our hotel, and afterwards we sat for half-an-hour in a café on the south side of the Puerta. It was here that we learnt the

origin of a graceful custom. C—— told us that the glass of water given with coffee is a present from the waiter in acknowledgment beforehand of his "tip." Formerly he gave a small glass of cognac, but the raising of the alcohol duties put that beyond his means.

We spent the rest of the evening wandering about the streets of the city. C—— has lived in Madrid for several years and has made a special study of its historical associations, so that he had a story to tell us of every important building, public or private, which he pointed out. Most of the stories were of the kind which are called scandalous, thus confirming our instinctive impression that, at any rate in the past, the atmosphere of Madrid society was that of rather sordid intrigue. But C—— gave us interesting sidelights on matters of history. He was in Madrid at the time of the royal marriage, and as we passed the "House of the Bomb" in the Calle Mayor he told us a dozen little intimate details of a kind which does not get into the papers, gathered from actors in and spectators of the tragedy. The dull ordinariness of the street, looking so little like the scene of anything connected with royalty, gave point to his anecdotes. Occasionally we turned off to the right or left to look at some building interesting for its associations. In a dark and narrow street beside the Ayuntamiento a lover clung to the bars of a window whispering to a girl within.

We came out upon the great square before the

royal palace. It was as if we had come to the edge of the world. We looked out upon a black gulf, swept by a cool wind, in which a few lights twinkled like stars. Inside the railings which enclose the huge dim-lit courtyard of the palace a soldier on guard moved slowly to and fro. The wide gravelled space outside the railings was searched from corner to corner by the glare of arc lamps as if to betray the approach of a possible enemy. As we stood there the soldier in the courtyard changed his beat and came and peered at us through the bars. The dazzling light showed up every inequality in the ground, and I noticed as an example of the national carelessness of detail, even in the precincts of a royal residence, that a lid of a manhole in front of the gates was broken and awry. The end of a building in sight of the palace windows was disfigured by a sprawling advertisement of beer. This end of the city was strangely silent and deserted. The king and the royal family are, I believe, popular in Madrid, as throughout Spain; but the effect of the barrack of a palace by night was that of a heartless isolation.

We retraced our steps and turned into the Plaza Mayor, once the social centre of Madrid and the scene of royal bull-fights and of *autos-da-fé* at the time of the Inquisition. The balconies of the grim and solid-looking houses were fitted up as boxes for the spectators, amongst whom Charles I. of England was once present at a bull-fight. Now many of the houses are turned into shops, and the

square is laid out as a pleasure-garden; but the place still retains a look of sinister grandeur, as if the buildings were indelibly stained with old crimes.

From here we passed down the Calle de Toledo into the Rastro, a notable thieves' quarter, and one of the largest "rag-fairs" in the world. At this hour of night it was quiet and comparatively deserted, but the squalid houses and the aspect of the men lying full length on the pavement gave us a good idea of its character. One felt that it was well to avoid stumbling over those *al fresco* sleepers. C—— advised us to come to the Rastro in the morning, when the market would be in full swing, though not so full as on Sunday. Not only the general scene, but the stalls of the dealers in second-hand books and *bric-à-brac* were worth inspection. Sometimes there were good bargains to be made, if one did not inquire too closely into the history of the article, for anything stolen in Madrid soon finds its way into the Rastro. The lower end of the irregular Plaza was in darkness, and C—— thought that it would not be discreet to walk any farther in that direction at so late an hour.

We returned to the Puerta del Sol and followed the Calle de Alcalá, where crowds of people explained the deserted look of the western quarter of the city. The more fashionable folk had apparently retired for the night, but I was again struck by the hardness and lack of amenity between one

person and another among those that remained. They gave the impression of being less out for enjoyment than because it was impossible to find rest or comfort within doors. The hard glare of the electric light gave the effect of a nightmare noon, and the flitting of innumerable bats added to the weirdness of the scene. Thirst was a problem, and revolting from alcohol, we found intense but fugitive relief in some decoction of oranges sucked through a straw. I remember drinking three tall tumblerfuls on end. It was half-past one before we returned to our hotel, and still the Calle de Alcalá was thronged with people moving irritably in an infernal mockery of noonday.

We walked through the Rastro on the following morning, and found it a larger and more picturesque "Petticoat Lane." A great number of the stalls contained the merest rubbish, second-hand clothing of all kinds, broken furniture, and the apparently useless scrap-iron which forms the principal stock-in-trade of the marine store-dealer. Here and there, however, were some interesting pieces of old metal-work, copper vessels of all shapes and sizes, and beautiful four-spouted lamps of brass. The lower, enclosed portion of the market, which is called, I believe, the Cerrillo del Rastro, contained nothing but articles of metal, including some good specimens of wrought iron. We felt that our knowledge of the language was too slight to enable us to bargain successfully with the sullen-looking owners of the stalls, and our few

experimental attempts were met by extravagant demands. A couple of Civil Guards, looking very large and clean, patrolled the market. Apparently the Rastro is the sink of Madrid, a concentration camp of shady characters watched over by the authorities, but not interfered with so long as they keep to their own quarters, and do not commit any crime which must be officially noticed. We made our way southward through a dirty quarter, and came out upon the Ronda de Embajadóres, near the National Tobacco Factory.

We had intended to spend part of the morning at the Royal Armoury—the finest in Europe—but on reference to Baedeker we found that though the hours of admission are from ten to twelve, tickets must be obtained on the afternoon of the day before. This regulation was so perfectly in keeping with the character of Madrid as a place remarkable for the number of things you can't or mustn't do, that we felt only mildly disappointed. We took tram from the Embajadóres, and spent the rest of the morning in the Prado Museum.

After lunch we met C—— by appointment to see the modern pictures in the Palacio de la Nacional y Museo de Arte Moderno Biblioteca in the Paseo de Recolétos. The building was closed, but C—— overcame the difficulty with two *pesetas* and a little conversation with the caretaker. I confess that I have but the haziest recollection of the contents of the Museo de Arte Moderno. My general impression is of an estimable preoccupation with

native scenes and subjects, faithful representations of historical incidents and "anecdote" pictures. I do not remember having seen a single picture which might not have been painted by an Englishman or a Frenchman, and indeed I have seen more interesting examples of modern Spanish painting in London and Paris.

CHAPTER XV

FIRST VIEW OF TOLEDO—THE TAGUS—THE CENTRE OF SPAIN—TOLEDO CATHEDRAL—SWORDS—YOUNG TORMENTORS—EL CRISTO DE LA LUZ—THE PUERTA DEL SOL—THE WOMEN OF TOLEDO—MILITARY CADETS—THE MOZARABIC MASS—SANTO TOMÉ AND SAN JUAN DE LOS REYES—THE TREASURES OF THE CATHEDRAL—THE PUENTE DE SAN MARTIN—THE VIRGIN OF CARMEN

EARLY in the morning we took tram from the Carrera de San Jerónimo to the station of Mediodía for Toledo. We nearly missed our train, for the Calle Alfonso XII. was "up," and as we were descending the hill in sight of the station a heavy cart crossing the road got stuck in a trench, and one of the team of six mules harnessed in single file fell down upon the tram lines ahead. We were struck by the want of intelligence shown by the men in charge, for instead of unhitching the mules, when they could have backed the cart easily, they tried to flog them forward, dragging their fallen comrade. After watching this senseless performance for three minutes we got out and ran, and reached the station just in time to take our tickets.

The immediate environs of Madrid to the south

are new and ugly and dominated by gasworks, but the city builds up well from this point in a distant view. We were soon out in the typical Castilian country of corn, corn, corn, very pale under the brilliant sunlight, so that the cloudless blue sky looked dark by contrast. Only a few olive trees and vines broke the monotony of the surface. Scarlet poppies and blue chicory made a continuous belt of clean colour beside the line. Out in the plain oxen harnessed to some heavy implement moved round in a circle, treading out the corn, and at intervals a great heap of grain showed the result of their labours. One might suppose that Castile furnished the bread of all the world. At Algodor we were in a granite country, and thereafter followed the Tagus, with a narrow fertile belt and poplar trees on either side.

The station of Toledo, which is some little distance from the city, is infested by would-be guides, and in fighting our way through them to the hotel omnibus we could not look round, so that our first view of the "Spanish Rome" came suddenly at the end of an avenue of poplars. We knew then that we had kept the best until the last. From a distance Toledo is like the magic city of a child's imagination; it has an indescribable effect of sudden completeness, and one finds difficulty in believing that it was built by man. Even on a nearer approach it looks less built than hewn out of the rock rising sheer from a horseshoe bend of the Tagus. If a sculptor had to make a symbolical

figure of Toledo he might carve a woman with a stern, eager profile, fine-drawn, level brows and proud lips, half emerged from a rock, bending a little forward, with her right hand resting on the hilt of a sword.

Swinging round a curve at the end of the avenue we came to the two-towered Alcántara bridge, of Moorish origin, the only approach to the city on the eastern side. From the bridge we had a splendid view of the gorge of the Tagus and the city piling up to the square mass of the Alcázar. The character of the rocky ravine which makes Toledo impregnable on three sides is well described by the name of the river which flows through it, *Tajo* (a cut or incision). Even here, nearly three hundred miles from the sea, the Tagus is a respectable river of dark water with a sullen flow that gives the impression of tremendous power.

We crossed the bridge and began a spiral ascent which reminded me of pictures of the Tower of Babel. Before us to the left was the Moorish Puerta del Sol, and to the right the Church of Santiago and the Hospital of San Juan Bautista, in the milder suburb where the horseshoe mass of rock on which the city is built declines northward into the plain of Castile. Just below the Puerta del Sol we turned sharply to the left and, entering the city, crossed the busy Plaza de Zocodovér and so came to the pleasant little Fonda del Lino in the Calle de la Plata.

Towns and cities may be roughly divided into

THE PUERTA DEL SOL; TOLEDO

those in which the houses are built beside the streets and those in which the streets are bored through the houses. It is evident, even in a journey from the station, that Toledo belongs to the latter class. It may be described as a dense mass of brown buildings on a brown rock, penetrated at random by narrow, irregular streets, or wynds, as they would be called in Edinburgh. I doubt if there is a straight run of a hundred yards in the whole city.

We rested for half-an-hour in the little cool sitting-room of the Fonda, where there were copies of *Mehalah* and of *London Opinion*. Already we had the strange feeling of having arrived at our destination, as if Toledo had been the object of our journey from England and everything else that we had seen in Spain but incidents by the way. I cannot explain this feeling, which only deepened with every hour of our visit. In this little brown city of some twenty thousand inhabitants, measuring less than a mile each way, we found the centrality we had missed from Madrid. We had reached a point of rest, not only the geographical but the spiritual centre of Spain. All Spain hummed and revolved round us. We had as if cut through concentric rings of life to find the heart of it. We had not seen, we were not to see, many famous places; Córdova, Seville, Granada, Barcelona, each of them had a special character, the note of a special Spain, but we had the conviction, no doubt illusory, that they all lacked some-

thing of the essential Spain in proportion as they were nearer to or farther from the character of Toledo. As in our approach from the relatively un-Spanish provinces of the North we had grown, as children would say, "hotter" in our quest of the essential Spain, so, if we journeyed southward to the Mediterranean border, to that side of Spain which is turned to the sun, we should be growing "colder." Seville might be more full of colour, Córdova and Granada more typically Moorish, and Barcelona more exuberant than Toledo, but they would be relatively un-Spanish if only by their intensity of local characteristics. They, as the cities of the North, represented particular Spains. As in Borrow's time the elements of these particular Spains are to be found in Madrid, but in that city without a co-ordinating principle they remain distinct and recognisable from each other. In Toledo they are fused together into something which, while partaking of the characters of them all in general, is like none of them in particular, and may fairly be called the character of Spain.

As if the illusion of all Spain revolving round Toledo were supported by an actual movement of the earth, the cathedral, which is the centre of Toledo, which is the centre of Spain, lies in a little depression — in the funnel of the vortex. The site of the cathedral is thus exactly the reverse of that of Burgos, and as it is even more closely pressed upon by houses, the building is even less visible as a whole from any

quarter. But you do not feel that it has the same need as Burgos to evade a leisurely examination. There is nothing here to excite the emotions at the expense of the judgment; no lantern with its disastrous suggestion of a bride-cake: and the general character of so much of the exterior as can be seen is that of a grave simplicity. The proportions are so good that you do not even recognise that it is a very large building, a hundred feet longer than Burgos. I suppose that Toledo Cathedral cannot be called a typically Spanish building, but in so far as it is, it reflects the virtues without the defects of the Spanish character. The elements of brutality and over-exuberance which run riot over Burgos are entirely absent from Toledo. You do not feel, either, that Toledo requires for comprehension the idea of a building in process of becoming; it is manifestly finished, complete in three dimensions. As an expression of religious emotion, though full of praise, it has passed the stage of *Te Deum* and reached that of *Nunc Dimittis.*

We entered by the Puerta del Reloj, so named from the clock above it in the north transept, which is only nominally a transept, and does not project beyond the outer aisle of the nave. The effect of the interior was immediate and identical upon both of us, crudely expressed, by which I don't remember, if it was not by both together, in the words, "It almost makes you cry." Moved by the same impulse, we walked the length of the building over the chequered pavement of black and white marble

and sat down on the broad shallow steps at the foot of the great western doors. Perhaps the difference in the effect of the interiors of Burgos and Toledo cathedrals might be summed up by saying that in one you want to walk about and in the other you want to sit down.

In Toledo the choir and the *capilla mayor* take up a much smaller proportion of the nave than at Burgos, and they are not joined together by screens, while the chapels form a mere shallow margin to the outer aisles. Consequently you have the whole interior under the eye at once, and nothing intrudes upon or takes from the impression of unity. There is nothing in the interior that one would wish away except some appalling sculptures aptly called by Ford "a fricassée of marble" at the back of the high altar, which are fortunately invisible from the nave. Whereas the feeling of restlessness induced by the interior of Burgos impels you to set off at once on an exploration of the chapels—as if, despairing of a single impression of the whole, you hoped to build one up synthetically by an examination of its parts, to find the cathedral in its chapels, so to speak—the immediate satisfaction of the senses by the interior of Toledo enables you to leave the chapels to be seen at leisure. The chapels indeed, though, as we were afterwards to find, beautiful and interesting, are so little in evidence that on a first visit, to judge by our experience, you forget all about them. Perhaps it is for this reason that I find myself thinking of Toledo

as a great church rather than as a cathedral. To my mind the former word lies closer to the idea of religion which Toledo expresses than the latter, which seems to imply a certain worldliness, a suggestion of temporal power and richness. Toledo Cathedral, for all its treasures, is significant of religion stripped to the bare bones. It is a monument of sheer faith; stern and even a little defiant, as if surrounded by enemies. One might without extravagance believe it to be the last stronghold of the Christian religion in the world. If it is in the city of Toledo that one finds the ultimate expression of Spain, it is in Toledo Cathedral that one finds the last word of religion which, under whatever disguises, is the ultimate residue of the Spanish character.

For all its effect of space and dignity and stern insistence upon faith, Toledo Cathedral is one of the friendliest buildings I have ever been in. It is as homely as a little moorland church in Cornwall. We sat for a long time on the western steps which, running the whole width of the nave, are as if made for the descent of an army—the building somehow gains in finality from its floor being below the level of the street—unwilling to disturb our first impression of the wonderful interior. Probably by reason of the hour, about noon, we were left undisturbed by any sacristan wishing us to look at the individual treasures under his charge. At intervals a woman would come in swiftly and silently by one of the smaller doors and fling her-

self on her knees before an altar with passionate abandon; otherwise we had the building to ourselves. When at last we moved, we were disinclined even to take advantage of this comparative solitude to look at anything in detail, feeling that it was better to carry our impressions of the whole unbroken into the open air.

The confession of Street, the architect, quoted by Baedeker, that he could not find his way about Toledo without a guide put us on our mettle. Perhaps we were aided by our apprenticeship to the labyrinthine ways of Cornish fishing towns, but with the help of a compass, we had little difficulty in making ourselves familiar with the general plan of the city. We walked completely round it and pierced it through in several directions, contenting ourselves for this afternoon with the outsides of the buildings we hoped to visit on the morrow. Most of the streets are too narrow for wheeled traffic, and so Toledo is strangely quiet, as if it were actually the sleeping centre of Spain.

Yet this very quiet gives you the impression of a place where people are busily engaged upon some private occupation which they have carried on for a very long time. Toledo still keeps up the making of swords for which it is famous: there is a Government Arms Factory a little way down the Tagus, and there are many shops for the sale of knives, scissors, and other articles of damascened steel. In a narrow street near the cathedral we came upon a smithy where lean, brown men were

making a great iron cage for hanging a church bell. They called us into the yard and pointed to a filled-in Moorish arch in the brickwork over the forge as if they were proud of the antiquity of their craft. The bell itself, they said, was founded somewhere in the north, I think at Logroño. Unlike Burgos, which is middle-aged, Toledo is a very old city—I don't mean from the length of time it has been in existence, but in character. You feel that it was always old, or that it became suddenly old upon some crisis, and that it will not become appreciably older for many centuries. There are traces of every period in the buildings, but the predominating character is Moorish. Most of the houses turn their backs to the street; the few, small windows are heavily barred, and massive iron-bound gates protect the entrances. Only here and there you get a glimpse into a central *pátio* bright with flowers in poignant contrast to the universal dusty brown of the surrounding walls.

After two or three hours' wandering at random among these fascinating streets we came out past the ugly new Diputación upon the crumbling northern walls above the suburb of Santiago where there is a very old church with a beautiful Moorish tower. As we stood refreshing our eyes upon the trees in the wide plain below, we were assailed by a crowd of little boys who took us to be Frenchmen and danced round us with mocking cries of "*Mon petit chou!*" and, why I don't know, unless they thought we were strolling musicians,

imitations of playing the tin whistle. They were led by a handsome young imp of about eleven whom we were to see again in a very different character. We shook them off with difficulty and presently found ourselves by the little ruined church, once a mosque, of El Cristo de la Luz. Although we had intended to leave the examination of interiors until the next day, the late afternoon seemed somehow a fitting time to visit this pathetic survival of two faiths. It seemed proper, too, that the caretaker should be a woman with the sweet gravity of manner which is characteristic of the women of Toledo. She lived, apparently with her mother, in a cottage with a lovely garden of carnations, figs, and vines, in the precincts of the church. Having unlocked the door, she left us to our own devices.

Like most of the Moorish remains in Toledo, El Cristo de la Luz is built of very thin red bricks, which with the light lines of mortar make a beautiful and characteristic wall surface. The outside is broken by two tiers of blind arches, the lower round-headed, the upper many-cusped. According to a Moorish inscription, the tiny mosque, only about twenty-one feet by twenty, was built in 922 incorporating the remains of an earlier Visigothic church, and the apse was added in the twelfth century. The name, "the Christ of the Light," is derived from a legend which tells how the horse of the Cid, on the triumphal entry of Alfonso VI., fell on its knees at the door of the

IN THE ZOCODOVÉR; TOLEDO

mosque and refused to move. The wall being opened revealed a niche containing a crucifix and a lamp still burning. So the first mass in the conquered city was said in this building, the Christ of the Light. The interior of both the mosque and the Christian addition is now completely ruined; the floor is an uneven mass of rubbish, and there is a ragged hole where the altar-stone was torn away. The Moorish portion is divided into nine compartments by four round columns of marble, with carved capitals, supporting sixteen white horseshoe arches which intersect above to form an intricate vaulting.

From the caretaker of El Cristo de la Luz we got permission to ascend the Puerta del Sol. The interior is elaborately fortified with little stairways and loopholed galleries, all of narrow brick, and from the ramparts of the towers there is a magnificent view of the surrounding country, including a bend of the Tagus.

We spent the evening in the Plaza de Zocodovér, which is the social centre of Toledo. A fine Moorish gateway, the Arco de la Sangre de Cristo, on the eastern side, gives a descending vista to the river. Cervantes, who must have often walked in the Zocodovér, lived in a house, now the Posada de la Sangre, immediately below the gateway. There are two or three cafés in the Zocodovér under the arcades of the surrounding houses, and this fine warm evening tables were set out in the Plaza itself, with awnings, and soft incandescent

lamps hung from temporary wires. We fancied that the people of Toledo were quieter and graver than any we had seen in Spain. Particularly the women; we saw several very beautiful faces, pale, with deep, steady eyes, and clear-cut profiles of a tragical intensity. In appearance and movement the women suggested an Arab mixture in the race. The effect of them was well described by James when he said, after a thoughtful silence:

"One couldn't flirt with these women; it would have to be the real thing or nothing."

A curious and attractive feature of so old a city is the presence of a great many very young soldiers. Toledo is a training-place for military cadets, and with their charming uniforms of grey and cardinal, and slender, cross-hilted swords, they lend an atmosphere of young chivalry to the place where everything else is old and a little tired.

In the morning we attended the Mozarabic mass at the cathedral. This use, which differs in several important respects from the Roman, is said to be that of the primitive church, and it closely resembles the Communion Service of the English Prayer-Book. The word Mozarabic (= *Muzárabe*) means "in the midst of, or mixed with the Arabs or Moors." Copies of the Mozarabic book of devotion containing the text of the mass in parallel Spanish and Latin, a history of the ritual, and a description of the offices may be bought in the sacristy of the cathedral.

We knelt with half-a-dozen men and women in the entrance to the Mozarabic chapel in the south-west corner of the great building. Another mass was being celebrated at the high altar, with music, and one could hear the organist feeling for the intonation of the two celebrants; now supporting one and now the other, so that the two services were bound together in a garment of sound without conflict or confusion. The Mozarabic ritual is very simple and earnest, and I fancied in the quick responses a defiant intonation, as if they were still coloured by the fanaticism of the Moslems. They sounded like battle-cries. A noticeable feature was the response of "Amen" to each petition of the *Paternoster*. The deacon wore a silver wand depending from his right wrist, but for what reason I do not know. At one point in the service a choir-boy came to the door of the chapel with a bundle of papers, and, beckoning to the server, gave them to him to place on the altar. The nonchalant and even jaunty manner of these boys, as if they brought a number of letters to be stamped, did not give the impression of irreverence, but as if the whole business were so real and practical that it could be treated light-heartedly. Not for the first time I felt that Spain was the first professionally religious country I had been in; that by comparison the religion of other countries was the religion of amateurs.

In order to see the treasury, chapels, and other special parts of the cathedral it is necessary to get

coupons of admission from the superintendent's office in the upper cloisters. We lost our way trying to find this place and intruded upon a scene from the Middle Ages; a large room filled with musty volumes of music where two priests and a layman, I suppose the choirmaster, stood in enthusiastic argument over an immense brown page of black-letter notation. The layman, who was humming and beating time, stopped with uplifted forefinger on our entrance, and then directed us to the proper place. Here a very old priest sat over his *desayuno;* he rose and with a graceful gesture of both hands invited us to share his breakfast of a tiny cup of chocolate—the size of an English egg-cup—and a piece of bread. From an adjoining room a woman on her knees peered in at us curiously. The old priest painfully filled in the coupons—a green one giving admission to the "*Tesoro Mayor, Sacristia y Ochavo, Ropas*" and an orange to the "*Sala Capitular, Coro y Capillas*" at half-past three in the afternoon—and when he had finished he dried the writing with sand.

We spent the rest of the morning looking at the churches of Santo Tomé and San Juan de los Reyes. The custodian of both lives in the Calle del Angel, and before we started for Santo Tomé the little fat Sancho Panza of a man showed us his collection of curiosities; Moorish tiles, old sword-blades, holy-water stoups, and pictures. Santo Tomé, originally a mosque, was rebuilt in the fourteenth century. The most interesting

portion is the tower, an admirable example of Moorish work. The treasure of the church is El Greco's famous picture of the burial of Count Orgáz, a strange piece of work that reminds you a little of Blake. San Juan de los Reyes, which occupies a commanding position at the extreme west of the city, overlooking the Tagus, is a huge building in a debased Gothic, which recalls the worst features of Burgos Cathedral. Here, as there, stone is treated out of all regard for its character, and the carving degenerates into confectionery. The outside of the church is hung with chains and fetters struck from the limbs of Christian captives of the Moors. Built to commemorate a victory, San Juan de los Reyes is a florid and hysterical outburst of jubilation quite out of character with the sad, stern dignity of the city to which it belongs.

When we presented our coupons in the cathedral at half-past three we understood the reason for so much method. Each portion of the building is in the charge of a special sacristan. The unclean brute who showed us the Capilla Mayor with its fine screen of gilded iron, huge *retablo*, and beautiful triforium of horseshoe arches, spat on the marble mosaic pavement in front of the high altar, and we were glad to be handed over to a sympathetic old man who murmured impressively "*Un tesoro artistico*" as he unlocked the gates of the choir. Here as at Burgos the exquisite carving of the double row of stalls is

the chief glory. From a single visit it is impossible to give an adequate account of this veritable "artistic treasure," and I can only mention the three lecterns, the gigantic illuminated books of offices, each worth a day's examination, and a very old figure of the Virgin—"*Muy antiguo*," whispered our guide—known as the Black Virgin with the White Face.

When we had been taken round the chapels there was a little pause, and we understood that in order to visit the treasury we must be accompanied by canons. As we waited under the gigantic figure of St. Christopher, a piece of naïve humour, forty-five feet high, which is painted on the wall of the south aisle, there was a little scuffle in the sacristy and three or four choir-boys came scampering out. One of them, who looked somehow familiar, danced up to us, holding out his cassock like a petticoat, and with a mischievous gleam of his dark eyes murmured under his breath, "*Mon petit chou!*" He was the ringleader of our young tormentors on the city walls the afternoon before. Evidently choir-boys are the same all the world over.

Three canons, two choir-boys, and a young sacristan marched with us to the chapel of San Juan in the north-west corner of the cathedral which contains the treasury. Each canon carried a separate key which he used in turn, and when at last the door swung open the reason for this precaution was evident. No single human being

would care to take the responsibility of guarding the portable works of art which are arranged in glass cases round the walls of the treasury. Putting workmanship on one side, the sheer value of metal and jewels is astonishing. The chief treasure is a ten-foot high Gothic *Custodia* of silver—the gold monstrance alone weighs four pounds—and there are innumerable reliquaries, censers, crosses, chalices, and other marvels of the jeweller's art in gold, silver, crystal, and precious stones. The result of a visit like ours is merely to be able to say that one has seen these things. Dropping a canon at a time—the choir-boys were evidently being taken round as a treat—we visited the Ochavo, Vestuario, Sacristía, and Sala Capitular, where there is some very good Moorish plaster-work. As a little human touch—behind the door of a room leading into the sacristy we came upon a young priest enjoying a surreptitious cigarette. His expression of "caught" was most comical to see.

After all, in spite of the bewildering number and variety of "treasures," it is the effect of Toledo Cathedral itself that remains in my mind. It is without exception the most beautiful and impressive building I have been in. Fortunately, too, we remained late enough to get the full effect of the stained glass which with a declining sun becomes a perfect blaze of colour.

Late in the afternoon we walked westward through the city and crossed the Puente de San

Martin. Here the Tagus emerging from its narrow gorge is lined with pleasant gardens which only enhance the barren, dusty look of the brown city on a brown rock beyond. Beggars haunted the towers of the bridge, and a few men were fishing in the dark waters of the river.

Everywhere in Toledo you are reminded of the sword. As we climbed the arid slope from the Puente de San Martin to the church of San Juan de los Reyes, we came upon an acacia tree filled with cicale. Their thin, dry music, without visible cause, and so curiously recalling the shape of the narrow leaves which were as motionless as if they had been cut out of green steel, sounded like the clashing of innumerable tiny blades one upon another in a fairy battle. Crossing the city we found the streets full of young military cadets with their uniforms of grey and cardinal, and slender swords of the cross-hilted pattern which is the peculiar emblem of romantic warfare.

From the Alcázar where these young soldiers are trained, we had a panorama of roofs with an angular alertness in their lines, and belfries with needle-pointed finials etched upon a sunset sky deepening without loss of clearness, as if clear wine were being slowly poured into clear water. Not a curve was visible anywhere nor anything green. The whole character of the place was that of an enchanted city of steel, and as if to

emphasise this effect of metal a dozen bells suddenly clanged out the hour.

We descended to the crumbling Moorish ramparts above the Alcántara bridge, the scene which my dream in Madrid had so curiously anticipated. Twenty or thirty soldiers in undress uniform lounged on the opposite side of the river and above them a cross stood out black against the sky. A bugle wailed, and as if in answer to the summons the small dark figures of two Civil Guards, carrying their rifles at the trail, emerged from a little building and began slowly to climb the tawny, precipitous bank of the river.

We skirted the ramparts, passed through the Puerta del Sol and, a little tired, ascended the steep street leading to the small, irregular Plaza de Zocodovér on our way to our hotel. As we approached the Plaza we were aware of some change in its usual activity. The cries of the dealers in cheap finery who line the pavement were hushed, and instead there was a vague sound of music. Balconies, which we had last seen bare, were hung with brightly coloured stuffs, crimson and purple and gold.

A dark mass of people, still and silent, filled the Plaza, and through their midst advanced a procession of girls dressed in white and bearing candles. Their faces shone with a solemn gladness and they moved, though soberly, with a dancing rhythm in their footsteps. As we came

nearer we saw that they were linked together by a broad white ribbon, which they held in their left hands. The ribbon was attached to the base of a statue of the Virgin and Child gently swaying on the shoulders of four men. Whatever crudity there was in the carving or colouring was redeemed by the blue dusk and soft uncertain glow of the candles. Upon the base of the statue white doves were sidling and fluttering.

The pale blue smoke of incense drifted across the yellow flames of the candles, and behind the thurifer came a band of young men with muted brass instruments playing the slow, lilting march to which the girls moved in time. Three priests in rich copes of white and gold followed, and the procession was closed by half-a-dozen grim soldiers unarmed and with heads uncovered.

This unexpected vision of white and gold, of girls and doves, in that stern and barren city had an extraordinarily poignant appeal. I had seen processions, religious and civic, in England, but always there was about them the uneasiness of the conscious amateur; a hint of the interesting survival or the revival, an over-anxiety about details, or a simpering conviction that they were traditionally "all right." But here those who took part and those who looked on were moved by the same spirit of easy enjoyment. It was not merely that every man in the crowd, from the ruffianly-looking gipsies, motionless on their

mules, to the slim cadets, the very type of high-bred chivalry, was reverently uncovered; there was in their faces a something finer than reverence, a whole-hearted acceptance of the thing done as an expression of their common emotion. It was as if the iron heart of the city had melted in a mood of tenderness. Fierce Toledo, the city of the sword, had blossomed in white-clad girls and white doves to do honour to the Virgin.

As they moved slowly round the Plaza the girls beckoned to companions in the crowd, who emerged into the soft glow of the candles and took hold of the white ribbon which linked them to the Virgin so that the procession always grew.

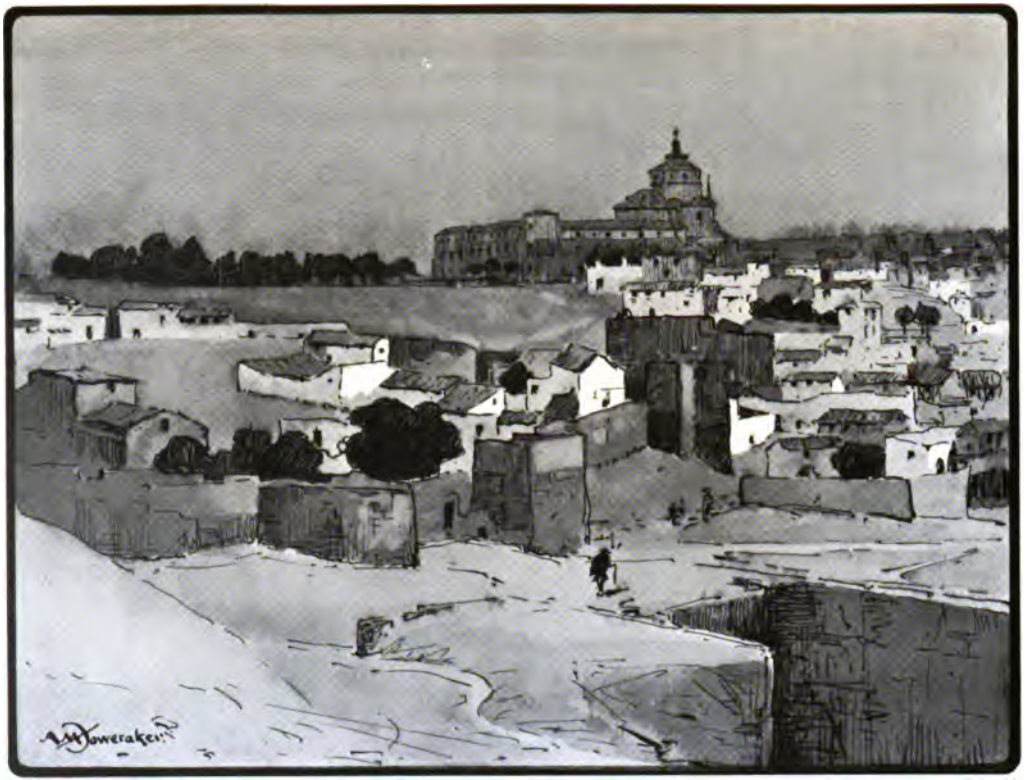
Behind it the business of the Plaza was gradually resumed. Little boys shouldered the red roulette cylinders by which one gambles innocently for *azucarillos*, gipsies put spurs to their mules and rode away, alert waiters polished their little tables, and the market-women returned to their unguarded wares upon the pavement and raised their harsh voices in passionate rivalry.

Crossing the Plaza we asked a priest the meaning of the procession. "It is the feast of the Virgin of Carmen," he said, "the Patroness of Bull-fighters."

So that even in her mood of tenderness Toledo remembered the sword.

On account of the *fiesta*, I suppose, we found

the Zocodovér dark and deserted after dinner and all Toledo gathered upon a little arc-lighted, bat-haunted terrace with a privet hedge and mulberry trees overlooking the black gulf of the Tagus. For entertainment there was a band, an open-air café, and a kinematograph which promised pictures of "The Chicago Tramways, Japanese Painters at work, The San Francisco Earthquake, The Ascent of Mont Blanc, and The Assassination of the King and Queen of Servia." In contrast to the evening crowd at Madrid, everybody here seemed to be friendly, content to walk up and down, eat caramels or the marchpane for which Toledo is famous, listen to the band, and answer with alacrity the purring of the electric bell which announced that another representation of the pictures was about to begin.



THE HOSPITAL; TOLEDO

CHAPTER XVI

GOOD-BYE TO SPAIN—THE POSSIBILITIES OF THIRD-CLASS TRAVELLING—A LONG JOURNEY—MIRANDA AGAIN—A LITTLE DRAMA—OUR CAPTAIN—BASQUE SONGS—"ATHENS WAS ONCE A FAMOUS PLACE"—DOWN THE BILBAO RIVER—CROSSING THE BAY—FINDING USHANT—THE LONG-SHIPS—CARDIFF ROADS

GOOD-BYE to Toledo was also good-bye to Spain, for the rest of our journeying was merely the passing renewal of previous impressions. We took an early train to Madrid where we spent the day with C——, intending to leave for Bilbao at five minutes to nine in the evening. We had yet to learn the full possibilities of third-class railway travelling in Spain, however, for when on C——'s advice we got to the station an hour before the time of starting, a sympathetic official told us that all the third-class tickets for that particular train were sold.

"These ladies," he said, pointing to a group of tired but patient-looking women in a corner of the booking-hall, "were here at seven o'clock, but alas! too late."

We understood, then, why Spanish main-line railway stations are always crowded with people

who have the look of patiently waiting upon Providence. There was another train at ten minutes past ten, but it would take five hours longer on the journey, and instead of reaching Bilbao at half-past ten in the morning we should not get there until half-past four in the afternoon. There was nothing to be done, so we sat down at the little tables on the platform outside the refreshment-room—themselves darkly significant of time to kill—drank vermouth and watched the five minutes to nine train fill up with luckier people. Their manner of excited congratulation spoke volumes. The departure of a train from the Spanish capital is like the starting of an emigrant steamer; it is a business of passionate and even despairing farewells and the shy beginnings of acquaintances for the journey. Several promising little affairs were in progress under our eyes. The presence of two ambulance men with a stretcher seemed unnecessary, but C—— told us that only a few days earlier a poor woman taking leave of her son had in her excitement been drawn under the train and fatally injured. As the moment of starting arrived the noise became deafening; people clung to the train as if they would storm the carriages, and officials ran up and down the platform with curses and cries of despair.

Our train was fortunately less crowded, and when I look back on the nineteen-hour journey the time seems to have passed very quickly. The night was fine and comparatively cool, with a half

moon but only light enough to make Escorial mysterious, and the granite country of the Guadarrama was heard rather than seen as we rattled among the foothills. Somewhere, I suppose it was at Ávila, we were awakened out of a doze by "*A-gua fresca!*" and bargained sleepily with a small boy for sweet cakes and wine. The quick resource of this youngster amused us. Time pressed, and disregarding the bottle I held out to be refilled he dashed into the station, returning with a full bottle in exchange. It must have been here that we were joined by a Civil Guard, more approachable than his fellows, who accepted a cigarette and told me many things about his corps; their life, duties, and number—which last I have forgotten, though it surprised me at the time. I fancy that he presently feared that he had been too communicative, or perhaps I bored him, for when I settled myself in my corner with closed eyes he very quietly picked up his rifle and moved to the compartment at the other end of the carriage. A smell of burning mingled with my dreams, which were cut short by a yell from James. He had dropped off to sleep with a lighted cigarette in his fingers, and the result was devout thankfulness that he had brought a second pair of trousers, and that circumstances permitted a change *en route.*

Dawn came beautifully between Ávila and Medina. The red eastern sky thickened about round-headed pines like dregs of wine, and the

level surface of the corn looked as if covered with hoar-frost. The sight of tall factory chimneys as we clanked slowly into Valladolid removed our feeling of regret that we had not found time to visit that city with a romantic name.

Miranda, where we had to change, we found still keeping up its character as a place for looking round. Among the strangely mingled crowd of men and women, young and old, rich and poor, shepherds, gipsies, and soldiers, two sun-burned, black-bearded Franciscan novices in brown habits with black hats, gazed with alarm at a sinuous young woman in a white dress, bare-armed to the elbow, with a pink silk petticoat and white shoes, who showed signs of a disposition to enter their compartment.

The country between Miranda and Bilbao was new to us, and the transition from the character of Castile to that of the Basque provinces was interesting to see. Gradually as we ascended through Álava the tawny cliff-like *sierras* changed to rugged mountain-peaks, maize took the place of corn, and the land became greener and greener. Characteristically Basque names appeared on the boards of the stations; Zuazo, Yzarra, and Yñoso, with their suggestion of prehistoric reptiles; the domed lanterns and friendly *porticos* of the brown churches were once more in evidence, and the people on the platforms were less grave, less reserved than those with whom we had lately become familiar. Between Yñoso and Orduño

the line twists and turns in an extraordinary manner; at one point there is a seven-mile loop, with the ends only half a mile apart. The scenery in this neighbourhood is magnificently Alpine. On the left rises the lofty Peña de Orduña, impressively topped with a cross, and to the right a deep wooded valley descends to a bottom of maizefields, dotted with little farms, reminding one strongly of pictures of Switzerland.

We shared the compartment with a rather gross-looking middle-aged man, apparently a commercial traveller, and a tall, good-looking girl of the poorer class, who seemed worn out with her journey. Her simplicity and fatigue gave the man an opportunity for striking up an acquaintance, which he then tried to improve beyond her liking. Assuming that we knew nothing of his language, he persecuted her with proposals, amusingly cautious from the commercial point of view, which she civilly but firmly declined. The dull brute couldn't see that her reluctance was not mercenary. From sheer helplessness she allowed him to get water for her to drink at one of the stations, but refused the glass of gin he offered. Her look of bored uneasiness was very painful to see, and we longed for an opportunity to interfere. Our difficulties with the language, however, might only have complicated an already delicate situation and further alarmed her, so we held our tongues, though once or twice I fancied that she looked at us thoughtfully as if making up her mind to risk

an appeal. I am glad to say the little drama ended happily, for the girl was met at Bilbao by her mother to the discomfiture of her sleek pursuer, who with the approaching end of the journey had risen to what he evidently regarded as rashly generous proposals.

In the Café Ingles, which looks out on the busy Arenal at Bilbao, we bargained with the English captain of a tramp steamer for a passage home. The band, led by two young ladies in picture hats, with nice discrimination for the tastes of English captains—there were four of them besides two mates and a chief engineer in our corner of the room — played the "Intermezzo" from "Cavalleria Rusticana." During the performance the English captains looked very sentimental, and when it was finished they applauded loudly and called for more drinks.

Our captain—for by this time we had made him ours—had the hoarsest voice I have ever heard. He had also bold black eyes and stiff black hair. He said that his vessel, which lay off the University, would sail for Cardiff at midnight, and that we could come on board whenever we liked.

We spent the evening with our friend Mr. Merton, who invited us to supper at his pleasant villa in the suburb of Deusto. On our way thither in the tram we saw the only drunken man we had seen in Spain. He was a ship's fireman in the maudlin stage of liquor, flinging his arms about

and singing foolishly. A woman in the tram giggled, but all the men looked ashamed and glanced at us two foreigners as if they would apologise for the spectacle. Our last night in Spain was made musical by young Mr. Merton, who sang old Basque songs, "Guernicaco Arbola," "Iru Damacho," "Katalin," and "Eleizara Joan," and a spirited modern composition, "La del Pañuelo Rojo," by Ignacio Tabuyo, a Bilbao poet and musician, in a splendid baritone.

Shortly after eleven we went down to the river by the University and hailed a little boat in the dark. It was paddled by a thin old man whose nationality we could not guess. His English was pleasantly broken, but at a slight contretemps with another boatman he made use of language which paled the ruddy glow from the iron foundry at El Desierto down the river.

"You're not a Spaniard," we said together.

"No, I'm a Greek," he said. He was born in Athens, but had spent most of his life in England, where his boys were at school. "My boys tell me," he said, "that Athens was once a famous place." We found that he belonged to our vessel, which lay under the tips on the far side of the river. She was about two hundred feet over all, she carried a crew of seventeen hands, and two thousand tons of iron ore, and, according to our Athenian, she rolled like a bloody pig. Her name —on second thoughts I will not give her name.

We had very comfortable berths in the deck

cabin, which was right aft. When we had stowed away our scanty luggage we went on deck, where men who talked in subdued voices were about the final preparations for departure; finishing off the hatches, hoisting the masthead light, and getting ready to lift the anchor. High above us on the river wall a *carabinero* leaned on his rifle under a fizzling arc light. A gentle-voiced young man who lounged in the alley-way under the bridge introduced himself as the chief engineer. An order was given followed by the noise of engines, and up came the anchor, each link of the chain bumping heavily on the deck. Then the river pilot, a tall Spaniard with a grey pointed beard, wearing a peaked cap and a long overcoat, came over the side apparently from nowhere. He lifted his cap and silently climbed the bridge. The engineer said "She's moving," and the next moment we felt a thrill under our feet. Moorings were cast off with muffled cries of "All clear aft, sir," the engineer swung himself down a ladder, and when we looked up at the bank again the motionless figure of the *carabinero* was already astern. There was something so peculiarly furtive in our leaving the shore that one half expected the *carabinero* to start to life and call us back.

Coming down the river the steamer gave us a taste of her quality. She seemed to have a pig-like disinclination to answer her helm. Twice we went through the following performance: "Hard a-port!" Nothing happened. "Stand by the

anchor!" immediately followed by "Let go the anchor!"

Then a line was got out to starboard, and with much language and the rattle of the donkey we were warped into our course. The first time we touched the bank—"Turned up a few stones," as the captain phrased it—and the second we nearly sank a couple of barges. After this exploit the captain said in a tone of mild wonder, presumably for our benefit, as we had joined him and the pilot on the bridge, "Can't understand it; she's never behaved like this coming down the river before. Dan," to the mate, "are them steering chains clear?" Dan disappeared aft. The pilot said nothing. As if grieved by his silence the captain called irritably down the tube to the wheel-house below, "Can't you see out of your windows?" adding to us, confidentially, "I don't think that old man's eyes are very good."

Dan reported all clear aft, and we moved slowly down the widening river. Ahead of us on the left bank the ruddy blaze of the foundry at El Desierto grew brighter and brighter; on the right a tram-car from Las Arenas moved like a glow-worm in the direction of Bilbao; above, the moon showed faintly through clouds. The captain looked at his watch. "At San Nicolas," he said, "they show a red light at high water. After that we can't go down, but must give way to vessels coming up. But I think we shall do it."

With a subtly foreign "Good night" the river

pilot got over the side, and the harbour pilot came aboard. As we quickened to half speed, familiar buildings on the now distant right bank slid past us. The Sailors' Institute was in darkness. On the left we passed close to a brilliantly lighted workshop, humming with machinery. We could see the black figures of men moving inside. Now we saw ahead the lights of Portugalete, reflected in the outer harbour, the green-glowing tamarisks of Las Arenas, and the black bar of the flying ferry; the whole backed by vague mountains mingling with the sky.

We opened the outer harbour. A salt fresh air blew up on our faces, and on the black surface of the water there was a hint of foam. Suddenly from a great headland on the right came two flashes in quick succession, as if by the unclosing of a hand. On the left a little pier pushed out into the harbour; a tiny uniformed figure leaned on the railing.

"Give him a shout," said the captain.

"Carrdeeff!" called the pilot. The tiny uniformed figure waved its arm and disappeared.

We were in the outer harbour, and already the steamer lifted to the Biscay swell. The pilot got over the side, and disappeared in the darkness. On the long mole ahead the two arms of a giant crane were lifted as if in entreaty, and below the flashing light on the headland there was the soft, steady glow of a fishing village. So our last vision of Spain was to be of the little place of crooked

streets and hidden gardens whose name we did not know.

During our first morning at sea the captain told us all about crossing the Bay. He believed that there were a few charts on board, but they had mostly peeled off. He did not hold with any finicking nonsense about taking observations.

"I've got my course in my 'ead," he explained. For the rest he relied on a five-shilling watch and the patent log.

No doubt it was all right, but we may be excused for feeling uncomfortable. We were not encouraged when we saw two deck hands lashing a gangway of planks from the main hatch to the ladder of the deck-house amidships.

"What's that for?" we asked.

"She ships a lot of water," they said.

She did.

Meanwhile the captain talked about the new load-line, which he said was a sop to owners to balance the more stringent regulations for the comfort of sailormen. He spoke with pride of the speed of his vessel. She did an average of eight and a half knots, and left all other tramps behind her. He believed in going ahead whatever the weather; if you went ahead you must get somewhere. Unfortunately he carried only Spanish firemen; one of the three had been knocked up with the heat last night—what could you expect of men who lived on bread and a little wine? The best firemen were Liverpool Irish-

men, but they had to be watched or they would steal the ship before they came aboard. Sailoring wasn't what it used to be; captains used to be able to make a bit of money. In the Black Sea trade, for example, there used to be nice little perquisites for mates and captains. You could sweep some of the grain through holes into bunkers—and sweep it out again after the cargo had been discharged. That was the mate's perquisite. Also something was allowed for matting—which could be used again. Nowadays, too, the men were so particular about their grub.

"Some men wouldn't be satisfied not if you gave them the left wing of a hangel."

Whenever we were not talking to the captain we were approached by the chief engineer. They were very good friends, but they differed in their politics, the captain being a Tory, and the engineer a Socialist. The engineer complained that the captain took advantage of his position to make use of personalities which he could not return; also he would not read the books he lent him. These turned out to be chiefly *Clarion* reprints, writings of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, and pamphlets of the I.L.P. The engineer, who was a little keen-faced Welshman, had a surprising acquaintance with unrelated facts of biology. To expose some fallacy of the captain's he set up a microscope on the hatchway head, and showed us the *stomata* and spiral vessels of larch leaves and bark.

The captain on his part had a remarkably sound taste in fiction. He spoke with enthusiasm of Conrad and Bullen. Clark Russell he couldn't read, and he didn't care much for Kipling or Jacobs. But his favourite author was a man of his own county, a Dorset man. For the moment he couldn't remember his name. Hardy, I suggested. Yes, that was it.

"I don't need to be told the name of a place he writes about. I can see it. Talking with the pen, that's what I call it."

Except for a distant tramp or two we were alone upon the indigo sea, but late in the glowing evening we saw two bonito or tunny boats; large, swift, red-sailed fore and aft schooners, with a tiny jigger astern. At the bows were two immense fishing-rods like the curved antennæ of a giant butterfly. They came on grandly against a sky of bronze, just beyond hailing distance, with a rush of violet foam about their bows. Then we saw three whales spouting astern, and presently a school of porpoises.

The Athenian had not belied his vessel. She rolled, and she shipped a lot of water. That night we turned in in our trousers. By jamming one elbow against the bulkhead, and one knee against the edge of the bunk, it was just possible to lie. The next morning we woke to a grey sea with a heavier swell, a drizzle of rain and a fresh breeze from the north-west. The funnel described an arc of forty-five degrees. White

seas poured over the port rail and flooded the main deck. According to the five-shilling watch and the patent log, we were due to sight Ushant at two o'clock. As noon wore, the captain and the first mate—a little bottle-nosed man, who had once been a captain—talked in undertones, and stared in the direction where Ushant ought to be. The weather to the eastward grew thicker. There was no sign of Ushant; nothing but a French fishing-boat under bare poles. We derived a little comfort from knots of seaweed on the heaving water, which showed that we were not very far from land, until we remembered that, from a sailor's point of view, it was exactly the land that we wanted to avoid. The captain, an excellent trencherman, did not wish for any tea. He and the mate now sat apart at opposite ends of the bridge, and said nothing to each other, though occasionally, after looking through his binoculars, the captain said something to himself. I think he a little regretted having talked so much about his five-shilling watch and his patent log.

Dusk fell; we had not seen Ushant. We retired to the chart-house under the bridge, and with a vague idea of security pillowed our heads on the Union Jack, and watched the starboard light plunge into the sea and soar up, up into the cloudy sky.

"Well," said the skipper, with exaggerated cheerfulness, "if we can't pick up one milestone

we'll go on to the next. We ought to sight the Wolf about three in the morning."

I for one was convinced that we should find the Wolf with our stem, and that the steamer would open like a paper bag of wet plums, and let out the heavy cargo and ourselves.

We climbed on to the bridge, which behaved like a switchback. The mate was looking very depressed.

"Dirty weather," we said sympathetically.

"Yes," he said, and for a moment did not continue. Then he went on:

"I had a letter from the missus the day before we left Bilbao, and she tells me that the second sowing of beans has gone the same way as the first."

I woke suddenly at four o'clock the next morning. A cold grey light filtered through the port at my side. James was missing from the bunk below. I ran barefoot on deck to find that the Longships were already astern, and that we were opening out Pendeen. It was a grey morning, with veiled sunlight and a drizzle of rain; typical Cornish weather. James, with a great air of superiority, sat on the bridge drinking tea with the second mate. There was something a little exasperating in passing so close to home that we could see the white puffs of an early train, with the knowledge that to reach home would require a day's railway travelling on the morrow. The skipper agreed that if we fell in

with a St. Ives fishing-boat we should ask the men to put us ashore. He himself, with deference to me, had a poor opinion of St. Ives fishermen. They were all savages and pirates. Once he had got among their luggers off the Brisons and they had cut away his patent log and stoned him with ballast.

All that day we steamed up the yellowing waters of the Bristol Channel. When the hatch-heads were knocked off I looked down at the cargo. In spite of our rolling in the Bay the heavy stuff lay in a finely pointed conical heap, just as it had fallen from the tip. At seven o'clock we were among grimy tugs in Cardiff Roads exchanging chaff with the crew of a rusty tramp from Buenos Aires, waiting for the flag to run up at the pierhead as a signal that we might move into dock.

Very carefully we crept to our narrow berth between the dock walls. Two customs officers came aboard, glanced up curiously from the paper the captain handed them to us and, smiling, asked a few questions, and next moment we were ashore. Our Spanish holiday was over.

The effect of being transported from Spain to England with only an interval of sea, which is no man's country, was very strange. Both James and I are lovers of our native land, but for a few minutes as we stood in the chill rain at a street corner waiting for a tram we suffered an acute depression of spirits. There was no colour any-

where; nobody spoke or moved with any vitality. They were grey people in a grey land. We had no place here. The impression of strangeness lasted only for a few minutes, and then we took hold of reality again.

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